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# **The impact of autonomy on the effectiveness of universities in Thailand**

A thesis

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of the requirements for the degree

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Management**

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## **Abstract**

Since the 1990s the Thai Government has worked to reform higher education to meet a need for greater effectiveness in public universities. Long established bureaucratic systems were judged to deliver an inappropriate administrative structure, therefore, the Government formulated policies and plans to push public universities to be more autonomous. However, the shift towards greater autonomy has potential benefits and drawbacks. The primary objective of this research is to examine the impact of autonomy on the effectiveness of Thai universities using an institutional theory perspective. The study adopts a qualitative, interpretivist methodology using a case study approach. Three Thai universities with distinctive backgrounds and at different stages of adopting an autonomous form were identified and chosen. The data was collected through a series of extensive, face-to-face semi-structured interviews with key senior members of each of the three case universities. Information was also collected from the Government sources, public information and from internal organisational records.

The research findings indicated that the influences of institutional pressures play a significant role in how each university adopts an autonomous model. While autonomy has brought benefits to the universities in terms of flexibility, it also has brought some challenges. The autonomous model has increased the level of complexity within the universities in terms of structure and administrative process. The level to which the university achieves the Government missions varies depending on how well it can adapt to the autonomous model. Two out of three case studies, are able to effectively adapt to the autonomous model, achieve the Government missions at higher level, while the other that is struggling to adapt, achieves at lower level. Historical root, identity and leadership are important variables in determining such different outcomes in the case studies. The analysis of the case studies suggests that the meaning of effectiveness is shaped by institutional factors and that universal forms of structure and governance in every university may not be appropriate.

This research concludes that rather than a focus on developing a standard autonomous form, the emphasis should be on standardisation of outcomes while allowing some measure of flexibility in how autonomy is interpreted in the structure and processes of each university.

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# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

### **1.1 Introductions**

Over the past two decades, there was an effort to reform education in Thailand due to the economic crisis affecting countries around the world in 1997 and increasing globalisation, along with the needs for greater effectiveness in public institutions. The scarcity of human intellectual capital was identified as one of the factors contributing to economic and social problems. Thai graduates capable of independent analytical thought were seen as crucial for the country's economic development, which increased pressure for the reform of the Thai educational system in order to become a nation of wealth, stability and dignity, and a full-fledged member of the global community. Consequently, Thai higher education is expected to play a key role in developing intellectual capabilities, as education is viewed as a crucial ingredient in the formation of such capabilities. However, the existing administrative structure within universities was judged to be a barrier to such developments as such bureaucratic systems were regarded as ineffective due to a lack of flexibility resulting in inertia in management (Dean & Snell, 1991). Hence, the Government, acting through the Office of the National Education Commission (ONEC) under the Prime Minister's Office, formulated policies and plans to bring about necessary changes within the Thai educational system.

The main focus of this study is to examine the impact of autonomy on the effectiveness of universities in Thailand. The regulatory changes instigated by the Thai Government over the last two decades, were designed to establish universities as autonomous organisations. The existing public universities were encouraged to change their status to become autonomous universities over a period of time. Though, they still remain under the dominion of the Government. The increased level of autonomy, primarily in the administration and management of Thai universities as organisations, subsequently affects the functioning of universities as a whole. The resulting dynamic changes are bound to have

an effect on organisational capabilities and in turn overall organisational effectiveness.

As a result of policy changes two master plans have been initiated aimed at fulfilling the Government's ultimate goals. Firstly, the 1999 National Education Act set the foundation for a more creative, questioning approach to learning. In higher education, it sought to decentralise finance and administration. This was to allow institutions and individual teachers more freedom to set curricula and mobilise resources, which in turn were intended to increase accountability and ensure that funds would become targeted more effectively. Secondly, consistent with the 1999 Act, the National Education Plan (2002-2016) was promulgated to embrace both quality and equity in education to towards better quality Thai graduates and consequently a better quality of life for Thai citizens.

The shift towards greater autonomy, as a consequence of previous financial constraints, has meant that there is a fundamental shift in the way higher educational institutions function. However, the shift towards autonomy has exposed flaws that need to be addressed in expanding the Thai higher education system. First, in general higher education has been less accessible by low-income and rural citizens. Second, the focus of secondary curricula tends to be on university preparation rather than on actual labour market requirements for vocational training. Third, the research performance of Thai universities is substandard both in terms of industrial needs and the volume of research activity. These flaws present Thai universities and management scholars with further opportunities to make changes to secure a better future for Thai students.

## **1.2 The purpose of the study**

Prior studies from Thai scholars, who debate with the change to increased autonomy in the University sector, have considered the potential benefits and drawbacks of becoming autonomous, especially financial issues (e.g. increasing tuition fees, decreasing funding from the Government) as this affects students and university administration. However, the impact of autonomy on the effectiveness of the universities

has received less attention. Understanding the change processes and its effects, will help determine potential strength and weakness that the Thai universities may encounter in a move towards greater autonomy. This research therefore adopts as a primary focus the impacts of autonomy on the effectiveness of universities in Thailand.

### **1.3 Significance of the study**

This study focuses on an issue that is crucial to Thai higher education. In the future, more universities will have to shift towards autonomy, either due to the Government policy, or due to competition in the educational market from private, and other autonomous universities.

A change in the autonomy of universities is bound to have an effect on different internal processes related to the function of individual universities. For example, one process is the financial model of universities, which is the first to be affected when the universities transition towards an autonomous model. Consequently, this will have an impact on university governance and will also lead to necessary changes in other functions.

As discussed in the statement above, significant changes have taken place in the higher education sector of Thailand over the last two decades. The anticipated advantages of this transition for university capabilities consist of, for example, flexibility in managing the universities and offering courses to meet the needs of the labour market. On the other hand, the disadvantages include, for example, the possibility that courses which cannot cover costs may be shut down. Further, it is difficult to be assured of transparency in the administration of universities (Kirtikara, 2001). The study is significant in order to understand the changes that are taking place in Thailand and to assist in the development of policy to support other universities transition to an autonomous model. Insight gained through this research will also help in establishing more effective universities, which are able to meet their organisational goals. This research focuses on university institutions, which are at different stages of change, in order to develop an understanding of the impact that this shift has on universities effectiveness.

## 1.4 Research questions

The research questions in this study will be examined under institutional perspective, which is a contemporarily comprehensive concept. In response to the research primary objectives, this research contains both an overarching research question and sub-question.

An overarching question for this research is:

***“How has greater autonomy impacted the effectiveness of universities in Thailand”?***

Sub-questions for this research are as follows:

- How have the three universities under study responded to the autonomous system set out by the Thai Government?
- How has the recent change in the universities’ capabilities, (which delegated responsibility for governance, academic, financial and personal management), affected the traditional long standing four main missions set out by the Thai Government (including producing graduates, conducting research, providing academic services and cultivation Thai arts and culture)?
- Are the outcomes of each university different? If so, what factors might lead to differences in the level of success?
- Is homogeneity of goals and missions set out by the Government the key to autonomous university effectiveness in Thailand?

To understand the context within which these changes are taking place, it is important to take into account the specifics regarding the background and current circumstances of the higher education sector in Thailand, which will be presented in the following chapter.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Context of the Study**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter first illustrates the history of Thai education including factors that led to Thai higher education reform. The process of reform in higher education are outlined later in this chapter in order to reflect the problems of higher education. This chapter is set out in two main sections:

1. Background of the Thai higher education
2. Higher education reform
  - The problems and challenges of higher education in Thailand
  - The impacts of the 1999 National Education Act on higher education reform
  - The impact of the Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education (2008-2022) on higher education reform
  - University Autonomy in Thailand

The development of Thai education can be traced back to the ancient period (1238-1868) which is divided into three eras; Sukhothai era (1238-1378), Ayutthaya era (1379-1767), and Thonburi and early Rattanakosin era (1768-1868). As a Buddhist country, Thai people were educated and learnt Thai intellectual wisdom in temples. Monks represented themselves as knowledge providers and male citizens were more likely to be sent to temples by their parents with the hope that they would be educated by the monks (Senachai, 2010). While only those females in prestige families would be sent to the royal palace in order to learn Thai women's wisdom (Srithong & Thepsumethanon, 1992).

Later, about a century ago, which was the period of modernisation Thailand opened its door for foreign investments particularly from Western countries which were viewed as powerful countries challenging sovereignty in Asia by claiming that Asian countries were underdeveloped requiring safe

custody. During 1868 –1910, King Chulalongkorn (King Rama the Fifth) tried to avoid being colonised by Western countries but in order to do so Thailand needed to adapt itself in many different ways. The most crucial of which was deemed to improve people' intellectual capabilities by learning modern knowledge and ideas (Siwaruk, 2000, September 23). As a result, education in Thailand has become increasingly important. Moreover, the Thai elite was encouraged to learn English and Western cultures in order to be able to confidently communicate with Western people. Many young capable people including Royal family members were dispatched overseas for study purposes especially, in Europe and United States. With academic experience in foreign countries, these people became pioneers in developing the country and reinforcing the need for national academic standards to match the international levels.

King Chulalongkorn had established the first university in Thailand in 1940, which was recognised as the highest education level and the centre of a variety of knowledge. The key goal of higher education at that time, however, was a place where Thai citizens could be developed intellectually with new knowledge and innovative capabilities so that they would take leading roles in the Government services in order to modernise the country (Sangnapaboworn, 2003). As a consequence, most of the graduates were employed as civil servants to serve infrastructural development of the kingdom. Over time the Government established a number of higher education institutions, which similar to other Government service sectors at that time operated under a bureaucratic system controlled by the Office of the National Education Commission, the Ministry of University Affairs (MMA) and the Ministry of Education (MOE). In practice this created duplication in administration and gave rise to discrepancies in policies of the Thai higher education system. Following the end of World War II several educational institutes have been established by the private sector.

These private universities have increased significantly over the last few decades as a result of the increasing demand for higher education from a growing population and by 2012, there were a total of seventy-one private universities (Chaibumrung, 2012). While, private universities were free to

invest, to open new courses, and to attract both Thai and foreign specialists to teach, public universities were developed more slowly. Some lecturers have been attracted to teach in private universities because of higher pay. Overall, there has been a slow rate of development in the public universities compared to the private ones, thus Thai Government decided that a bureaucratic system acts as an unhelpful barrier to educational development.

The idea of educational expansion to provide cover throughout the country was encouraged in the 1960's. The intention was to extend educational growth to all students who live in rural parts of Thailand other than the capital and main centres. However, there remains a significant disparity between developed urban and rural areas. Most big universities are located in Bangkok and 44% of higher education institutions including public and private institutions are still located in or around the boundary of Bangkok (Kanpasit, 2007). Thus, students living in Bangkok and surrounding provinces have better access to higher education compared to students in more remote provinces. Students living in Bangkok and surrounding provinces have another advantage because institutions in these areas are supported by better infrastructure and standards of living and 70% of students at these institutions are from high-income families. These circumstances foster inequity in access to higher education institutions. The Thai Government recognises that it needs to address that inequity.

Although the concept of autonomous universities first emerged in the mid 1960's, there was no incorporation of public universities as at that time subsequent the Governments in Thailand were under a constitutional monarchy that saw ranking military people hold significant power over education administration. Consequently, public confidence in leading figures was low (Kirtikara, 2002). By the 1980's, the Government realised that higher education needed to be reorganised due to weaknesses initiated pressure towards university autonomy. Subsequently, the first higher education long range plan (1990-2004) was promulgated stipulating that any new public universities to be established must be autonomous

universities from the outset and the remaining public universities would be incorporated by 2000 (Kirtikara, 2002). As a consequence of the first long range plan, three new universities in 1990's were established as autonomous universities. Again, in 1991, there was another substantial effort to encourage fifteen public universities to become autonomous bodies. However, they were unconvinced that the concept of autonomy could apply in the universities especially with regard to funding support from the Government, resulting in a failure to shift towards becoming autonomous universities. One exception was a pioneer public university which chose to become an autonomous university in 1998 without any coercion.

In 1997, the first democratic elections were held and representatives of the people were elected directly for the first time. The economic crisis or "the Tom Yum Kung crisis" occurred shortly after these elections and Thailand had to rely on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) for financial support as the Thai Government over spent on education (Makmee, Sujiva, & Kanjanawasee, 2010). This stimulated the Thai Government to seriously consider education reform, especially focusing on root causes as to why Thailand was less able to deal with the Tom Yum Kung crisis. The main problems emerged from insufficient levels of educational achievement, and a deterioration in moral values as evidenced by increasing incidence of selfishness and corruption. The important question raised was that of how education could develop and establish a more highly educated population (Kaewchaicharoenkit, 2007). With the suggestions of the ADB in March 1998, the Government formulated the Corporatisation Policy under which all public universities would become autonomous public universities by 2002 in order to increase the effectiveness of administration (Rungratsamee, 2004)

However, the existing public universities remained reluctant to move towards becoming autonomous bodies due to a variety of concerns, especially with regard to public funding. At that time, there was no clear guidance from the Government led by Prime Minister Chuan Leekpai as to how autonomous universities would be funded. Eventually, the 1999

National Education Act, which has been a master act for education reform, was initiated and in 2001, Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatarat delivered a strong message confirming that public funding was still available for autonomous universities (Kirtikara, 2002).

When public universities become autonomous universities, the mechanisms for budget allocation change from the itemised approach to a block-grant basis. Although autonomous universities receive less financial support, they are granted more institutional autonomy in administration. Reformed universities are expected to achieve higher levels of productivity, efficiency, and effectiveness (Rungratsamee, 2004). It was argued by the World Bank that autonomous universities are more able to provide the kind of incentives (financial and others) that encourage higher quality education (World Bank, 1994). Four years after the period of the first long range plan, the Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education (2008-2022) was developed with the purpose of improving the quality of citizens' lives and enhancing national competitiveness.

Amidst the circumstances discussed above, the factors influencing Thai educational reform include social, economic, functional and political factors. Such factors and the 1999 National Education Act and the Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education (2008-2022) will be discussed in more detail in the sections that follow.

## **2.2 Higher education reform**

For Thailand, the need to address educational reform was urgent in order to meet the rapid changes expected in the twenty-first century and to be fully prepared for its future responsibilities. While the financial crisis highlighted the need for educational reforms as a concrete step in meeting new economic and social priorities, there were broader pressures, both international and domestic, that also urged the reform. These challenges are outlined in the following paragraphs.

### **2.2.1 The problems and challenges of higher education in Thailand**

*2.2.1.1 Inefficiency of administration:* Most public universities have experienced the negative effects of administration under a bureaucratic

system including inefficiency of the administration structure and the inflexibility of civil service work. With the bureaucratic system, the budget allocation is based on an itemised approach that is not responsive to the need for academic development and innovation as the regulatory framework is designed for routine not proactive work. The management style in public universities is generally unresponsive to the demands for rapid changes, especially in academic affairs. Academic staff receive insufficient salary and produce few research outputs because institutions lack incentive and support systems to encourage staff to conduct quality research. With these constraints, institutions are unable to attract the best and the brightest staff to teach and conduct research as most choose to work within industries where salaries are more attractive (Kirtikara, 2004). In addition, there are no effective tools or systems to monitor and evaluate the performance of public higher education institutions to improve their standards in order to cope with current domestic and international competition. Thus, the old style of administration needs to be replaced with more effective management systems.

*2.2.1.2 Low level of research:* As public higher education institutions lack the incentives and systems to encourage academic staff to conduct quality research, the volume of research output remains low. When compared with other Southeast Asian nations (ASEAN), the number of Thai publications has been higher than neighbouring countries such as Vietnam, Philippines, and Indonesia. However, the number of Thai publications has still been low when compared with a developed country such as 'Singapore' which was in 1<sup>st</sup> ranking (ISI Databases, 2011). Even though the number of Thai publications increased slightly in 2010, from 6,186 in 2009 to 6,368 in 2010 which equals to 2.9%, the numbers of Malaysian publications increased significantly during 2009-2010, from 4,914 in 2009 to 6,706 in 2010 which equals to 36.5% (ISI Databases, 2011). This is reflected in Malaysia being ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in total publications in ASEAN in 2010 instead of Thailand.

In order to enhance the national competitiveness, the Thai higher education institutions need to improve their research both in quantity and

quality. This is because research will benefit students' creativity and individuality, which in turn, will lead them to become high-quality human resources in the future.

*2.2.1.3 Access to higher education:* Gross enrolment rates (GER) in Thai higher education increased steadily from 39% to 50% between 2001 and 2007 which equals to a 28.2% increase which was similar to other East Asian economies, except South Korea which was slightly higher. The total number of tertiary students increased from 78,000 in 1971 to over 2 million in 2005 which was raised a total of 24.6 times as a result of the increasing demand for high-skilled workers. Even though this ratio was regarded as a good ratio in East Asia, this ratio still fell behind the expectations of countries that are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development-OECD (World Bank, 2009).

When analysing regional access, the highest participation rate in higher education is in Bangkok, followed by the central and southern regions. Research suggests this is because most higher education institutions are located in urban areas (World Bank, 2009). In short people who live in or near major urban centres have easier access to higher education. Forty-four percent of higher education institutions are located around the Bangkok area, which means students who live in or near Bangkok have easier access to higher education than those living in other provinces. Of the higher education students who study in universities in Bangkok, 70% are from high-income families (Kirtikara, 2004)

*2.2.1.4 Insufficient collaboration between higher education and industry sectors:* Connection between universities and industry sectors has been low although industry sectors currently collaborate more with universities on training projects, universities still need more collaboration on technology transfer and research funding (Kirtikara, 2004). In the past, industries and the universities positioned themselves in different roles and did not identify common goals which might have encouraged collaboration. In reality universities have a significant role to produce graduates who meet the needs of industry for well-educated employees, so it is necessary for both sectors to work together in order to ensure that graduates have some

focus on practice as well as theories in the class. This collaboration could enhance the development of desirable citizens for the future (Kirtikara, 2004).

*2.2.1.5 Greater demand for higher education:* Thailand has experienced an era of population growth and the new educational policy, reflected in the 1999 National Education Act, ensures 9-years compulsory education and 12-years of free basic education that allows students to study free until secondary school. These initiatives have led to the number of high school graduates who intend to continue their study in higher education institutions to increase from 0.7 million in 2000 to 1.8 million in 2016, or a 150% increase during the 15 years (Kirtikara, 2001). As higher education institutions still have limited capability to manage the increased demand for higher education, this created a great pressure on the higher educational system. However, this pressure has been eased as Thailand has moved out of an era of population growth with the number of high school graduates decreasing from 800,000 to 600,000 (Thongrot, 2008, November 8, 10, 12, 13). This does raise the possibility that the Thai education system might face the problem of greater supply than demand in the future.

*2.2.1.6 Limitation of education resources:* For thirty years before 1997, Thai public universities received approximately 80% of their funding from the Government. Following the economic crisis in 1997, GDP growth fell from 8.7% in 1995 to -0.4% in 1997 and -8% in 1998, and the Government could not support the same level of financial budget for education. In 2010, the Government spent 22.31% on education which translated to 3.8% of GDP (world Bank Group, 2013).

*2.2.1.7 Limitation of traditional teaching styles:* Traditionally, the predominant university teaching style has been lecture-based where lecturers provide knowledge to students who are only receivers. This style of teacher centeredness has discouraged innovation in Thai education for several decades (Phungphol, 2005). However, following the economic crisis and the National Education Act in 1999, it was recognised that Thai society needed to develop its population's skills in terms of comprehensive thinking capabilities, analytical skills and ability to synthesise information on complex



issues (Lemworamate, 2008). This has required higher education institutions to redesign teaching styles from lecture-based to research-based in order to cultivate students' attitudes and behaviours of lifelong learning (Phungphol, 2005). Although some researchers have raised concerns that Thai identity could be undermined by applying western technology to education, it can also be an opportunity for Thailand to enhance economic growth if Thai education has the same standards as other developed countries (Kirtikara, 2004).

*2.2.1.8 The reduction of higher education human resource:* The reduction in staff resources due to resignations and retirements of talented civil servants and lecturers has encouraged the higher education sector to reorganise administrative systems. It was decided that flexible and efficient organisations could attract new talented personnel to replace those who have left and to enable more intensive recruitment and maintenance of capable human resources (Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

In response to the concerns discussed above, there was a strong demand for higher education reform to ensure improved levels of quality, efficiency and effectiveness. Presently, the higher education sector in Thailand is undergoing a profound transformation with the educational reform initiated by the 1999 National Education Act and the Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education (2008-2022). These two pieces of legislation provide the essential architecture for reform.

### **2.2.2 The impacts of the 1999 National Education Act on higher education reform**

The Guidelines from the law relevant to the reform of higher education can be classified into two categories: learning reform for the improvement of quality of learning that students experience and structural reform for the efficiency of administration. Overall, the important goal of the education reform is to develop and cultivate future young people who will be fulfilled with social and academic competence, virtue and happiness (Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

In accordance with the Act, learning reform is a key goal in all matters concerned with education reform. It emphasises the development of learning-oriented education, which allows the students to develop at their own pace and within their individual potential. Education should be based on the principle of lifelong learning enabling all learners to participate in learning and self-development. To develop Thai young people, the traditional lecture-based teaching style needs to be changed. Teaching staff are encouraged to change their role from teachers to facilitators and students to take a role of researchers in the learning activities so that they can learn together. Students from higher education institutions are also expected to apply their learning classroom to their real-life situations in order to develop their potential in personal and working life. In addition, to encourage a life-long learning society, not only formal education has supported the change of learning process but also non-formal education such as courses set up at public libraries or learning centres for general people. Higher education situated in local areas should also play a significant role to cultivate its local people with the modern knowledge, skills and Thai wisdom (ONEC, 2003).

Another point for educational reform is to revitalise Thai wisdom in the education system. Sangnapaboworn (2003) describes Thai wisdom as *“the body of knowledge, ability, outstanding value and skills the Thais inherited from experiences that are respectively preserved and transmitted through generations”*. Thai wisdom is regarded as a significant national asset which can enhance Thai youth’s problem-solving skill and quality of life. Therefore, it is felt to be important to integrate Thai wisdom into the Thai education system. Students can apply knowledge from classrooms and Thai wisdom into their real lives. With this, it can provide a balance to avoid an essentially western educational system overwhelming Thai education and Thai wisdom.

Regarding the structural reform, the Act has encouraged higher education institutions to develop appropriate administrative systems to enhance their autonomy and the quality of learning and research in the institutions (ONEC, 2003). The administration system of higher education

institutions is shifting from a centralised to a decentralised system - from central Government level control to more control within individual educational institutions. To do this, the Ministry of Education creates appropriate policies and plans to supervise, monitor, and evaluate the provision of education, and to allocate financial resources to all educational institutes (Sangnapaboworn, 2003). Thus, all higher education institutions are required to establish a system of Quality Assurance to monitor the quality of education and to ensure that each institution demonstrates the level of responsibility, accountability, and transparency as required by law (ONEC, 2003).

During the promulgation of the Act, there have been some important changes taking place to support the development of higher education in Thailand and these changes are outlined in the following paragraphs

#### *2.2.2.1 Admission System Reform*

The new admission system created by the Special Task Force for Review of the Admission System was finally approved by the cabinet to be officially implemented in 2006. The new admission process aims at decreasing rote learning and increasing critical thinking, creativity, and authentic academic ability. With the new admission system, students are expected to pay more attention to school exams and students' skills should be more in line with learning in the university. In addition, the new admission system is expected to alleviate the problem of student dropout because students can choose the field that is suitable for their skills.

#### *2.2.2.2 Learning Process*

The learning process is one of the most important educational elements. To create outstanding students who will be a valuable human resource in the future the old style of a lecture based learning process cannot support this ultimate goal. A new learning process, where students are the central focus, should be adopted to develop the required capabilities. "Problem-based learning" and "Project-based leaning" are examples of the new learning procedures and have been examined as effective ways of learning (Schmidt, Rotgans, & Yew, 2011). These styles

stimulate the development learners' knowledge and the skills to think logically in order to deal rigorously with complex problems.

#### *2.2.2.3. Quality Assurance System*

Because of the 1999 Act, higher education institutions have been required to develop a quality assurance system to ensure the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and transparency of their administrative system. A national agency, which is the office of the National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA) has been created and mandated to monitor individual institutions operations. All basic and higher education institutions are urged to conduct their regular self-evaluation before receiving the external evaluation by the Office's authorised evaluators (Sangnapaboworn, 2003).

#### *2.2.2.4. Restructuring Educational Administration and Management*

In order to continuously develop higher education, it was decided that the policies and regulatory frameworks should be consistent among institutions and related organisations. Otherwise, inconsistency may create inertia and ineffectiveness in development if there are too many fragmentary plans and standards. Therefore, in 2003, as a consequence of the Act and the Bureaucratic Reform Bill 2002, the Ministry of University Affairs and the former Ministry of Education were unified into the new Ministry of Education (MOE). This made all higher education institutions under both ministries subject to the same policies (Sangnapaboworn, 2003). There are five main bodies in the new MOE, which are:

1. The office of the Permanent Secretary, which deals with every general administrative function within the Ministry.
2. The Office of the Education Council (OEC) responsible for the preparation of the National Education Plan focusing on embracing religion, national culture, art and sports into education. The OEC has a further duty to make sure that all the educational plans, policies; standards are implemented in line with the National Education Plan.

3. The Office of the Basic Education Commission (OBEC) has the responsibility to manage and administer proceedings of the nation basic education.
4. The Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) undertakes all the functions of higher education including developing plans and standards, preparing and allocating resources and supervising the establishment of higher education institutions.
5. The Office of the Vocational Education Commission (OVEC) is the only national agency accountable for vocational education. The management and administration of technical and vocational education is embraced under the OVEC.

#### *2.2.2.5. University Autonomy*

One of the education reform objectives is to develop flexibility in the management of higher education in order to enhance academic excellence which was less assured under a bureaucratic management system. The reform of the education system is vital for Thailand's long-term recovery. Hence, the provision of 1999 Act is aimed at developing autonomy in public universities, which enables them to manage their own institutions. At the same time, more effective performance, efficiency and accountability to the society need to be ensured. These aspects can be achieved through good governance and can be assessed by the national agency.

As university autonomy is the core theme of this study and is a result of the 1999 Act the concept will be examined more precisely in section 2.3.4 after the discussion of the Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education (2008-2022), which is the recent key strategic plan promulgated to support the transformation of higher education. The plan guides higher education in Thailand to move forward in an appropriate direction.

### **2.2.3 The impact of the Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education (2008-2022) on the higher education reform**

In 2007, after the first plan ended in 2004, the Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for higher education was formulated by the OHEC and the Knowledge Network Institute of Thailand under the Foundation for the Promotion of the Ministry of University Affairs. The Ministry of Education assigned OHEC the task of developing the plan and the committee of the Higher Education Commission were responsible to supervise the formulation of this plan, which covers the period of 2008-2022. The primary objective of the plan is to raise the quality of the Thai higher education system to a point that more effectively fosters and supports the country's competitiveness. With a better system, universities can produce and develop high quality graduates with a capability for life-long work. The underlying means for attaining this goal will operate through greater university autonomy, harmonious in policy but allowing for variation in implementation by using four significant mechanisms and measurements consisting of:

1. good governance and sound management structures,
2. adequate financial support,
3. clear standards of higher education and
4. effective networking among universities (Pourri, 2008).

A variety of approaches such as roundtable, brainstorming and interviewing sessions were conducted to obtain the essential information from higher education key stakeholders, both the Government and industrial agencies, to draft the framework for the plan.

#### *2.2.3.1 The significant elements of the framework towards Thai higher education*

The framework of the plan has emphasised two major components, which underpin strategic planning and implementation for higher education. The first component focuses the potential impacts of both the international and regional socio-economic environments on the higher education and

society consisting of seven key issues. The second component is related to guidelines for the development of higher education system (Office of Higher Education Commission, 2008), which will be discussed later.

1. *Changes in the national demographic profile:* With the introduction of family planning in the 1980s the birth rate has decreased while the aging population has increased. Largely as a result of the declining birth rate the number of students who want to study in higher education have tended to decrease. This means that universities can focus on developing their education quality. At the same time, Thai education has put more emphasis on life-long learning due to increasing life expectancy.
2. *Energy and the environment:* The high dependency on imported energy makes Thailand at risk of energy supply disruption and volatility of energy prices. That dependency which can result in substantial foreign currency losses for the importing of energy. Also, some forms of energy have detrimental effects on the environment and mankind. Universities must accept a role to create awareness of renewable energy options graduates with an understanding of energy conservation.
3. *Conflict management and violence:* Since 2004 one of important problems in Thailand has been unrest in southern Thailand emerging from a variety of accumulated conflicts including its history, culture, ethnicity, religions, low quality education, employment and opportunities, and economy. Universities could play a significant role in resolving this problem in long term by improving education in southern parts of the country, by building a better understanding of the conflicts, and by improving access to employment through better education.

4. *Employment trend:* Universities should work with national planning agencies and the relevant sectors in order to produce graduates to support the nation's needs in the industrial and service sectors.
5. *Decentralised administration in the nation:* The central Government decentralised power to local administrative bodies (Or-Bor-Tor) by funding 25-35% of national budget for undertaking a variety of tasks. The greater autonomy from central control gives universities more freedom and flexibility to work more effectively with local administrative bodies. Also, with one mission of universities to provide services to the society, universities can work more with local administrative bodies to make more income.
6. *Sufficient Economy:* Since economic the crisis of 1997, Thai people have paid more attention to the philosophy of "Sufficient Economy" developed by King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand. Thailand cannot escape from the pressure of globalisation in the modern world. However, the "Sufficient Economy" will protect Thailand from future shocks by having the capability to support itself. "Sufficient Economy" focuses on the middle path of living, not too extravagantly or too thriftily, which can be applied to people at all levels. Thus, everyone should consider consuming what they really need and to care more about their impact on others and the planet. Higher education could play a significant role in building awareness of Thai people.
7. *Youth and students in the postmodern - post-industrial world:* Children and youth represent an important manpower resource for the country in the future. Future graduates will need new skills and capabilities according to an expansion of commercialisation and global connectivity. Universities need to focus on co-operative education, work-based education, and internship with social and local sectors.



In response to the pressures arising from the issues identified above, the second component comprising of nine strategic directions have been set out for the development of the higher education system (Office of the Higher Education Commission, n.d.).

*1. Articulation of the university system of basic and vocational education*

The Ministry of Education found that the quality of basic education and vocational education decreases dramatically, particularly in language competency, mathematics and sciences, low quality students would be the result. If some of them become school teachers, a cycle of producing low quality students could be perpetuated. Higher education can resolve this problem by:

- Improving quality of university teachers
- Providing special programs for talented students to enhance their knowledge and skills
- Creating flexibility in university education for practicing in real-life working such as vocational/technician qualifications

*2. Reform of the university education system*

In response to the weaknesses in higher education institutions, two aspects have been identified:

- Initiation of education assessment and standard regulation including resource distribution.
- Categorisation of Thai universities into four categories based on their capacity and aspiration including:

*3. community universities*

*4. four-year university universities and liberal arts colleges*

*5. specialised and comprehensive universities and*

*6. research and graduate universities.*

These developments are seen as effective solutions that will contribute to improvement in universities quality by minimising duplication among universities. Each group of universities would fulfil particular aspects of the national expectations of higher education.

### *1. Good governance and management*

Quality university council governance and management are vital for strengthening the higher education system, especially for the autonomous universities in Thailand. A greater degree of freedom should come with accountability and transparency. Internationally successful educational institutions should be taken into account as role models for establishing criteria for good governance and management.

### *2. Higher education institutions and national competitiveness*

Excellent in research is a requisite feature to increase the national competitiveness. Universities are regarded as sources of new knowledge. Innovation must play a significant role in strengthening the quality of national research. The research system in Thailand has not been well developed when compared with other countries with records of producing quality research. There are many challenges that need to be developed in order to enhance research competitiveness such as adequacy of funding sources, the co-operative quality between education and industry sectors, and the role of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). One result of this strategic direction has been the identification by OHEC in 2009 of nine institutions as national research universities.

### *3. New University financial system*

To use the limited public budget for higher education more effectively, financial allocation is based on the performance of each university and contributions from diverse stakeholders. Sometimes, the Government have a special fund to support university. However, such special funding depends on additional scheme that the Government initiates in order to encourage university to be responsive to the national's needs. For example, the "University Development Fund" scheme has been

established to focus on staff development and university to work in response to the national's needs. The indicators used for measuring outcomes of these operations are flexible and responsive to changing situations.

#### *4. University personnel development*

To be globally competitive, Thai universities need to develop more effective personnel systems. A Mentoring system as well as better structured career paths will benefit new university staff both academically and socially. This also help with the retention of qualified staff.

#### *5. Networking of universities*

Without good cooperation among the universities, it is difficult for the universities to foster excellence in the production of knowledge and innovations at the national level. High reputation universities should support newer universities by creating learning and staff development networks.

#### *6. Higher education plan for Southern Thailand*

There have been many suggestions for higher education to relieve the conflict and violence occurring in the southern part of Thailand. Such suggestions are:

- strength the quality of education in the area, both basic and higher education, to ensure better employment opportunities and
- heightened awareness of people to understand the multi-cultural nature of the region and create greater tolerance of differences between cultures.

#### *7. Development of learning infrastructure for university education*

Teaching and learning infrastructures are essential for higher education institution. The plan recommends that all curricula must serve the nation's needs and must be responsive to society. Physical infrastructure of university must also support learning environment of student. In today's world, information and communications technology system (ICT) is an

important tool to extend educational opportunities for student. Therefore, higher education is encouraged to develop and utilise ICT for teaching and learning purposes.

In conclusion, the 1999 Act has brought necessary changes in the higher education system, which have become the fundamental features of higher education reform in Thailand. The major change is decentralisation within the higher education system resulting in a greater level of university autonomy. The second 15 Year Long Range Plan for higher education has been developed to support the elemental changes required by the 1999 Act. Thai universities use the plan as a framework to comply with the nine strategic directions designed to meet national expectations.

#### **2.2.4 University autonomy in Thailand**

In effect of the requirements from the 1999 Act and the guidelines from the second 15 Year Long Range Plan, the Thai higher education has developed more strategically, especially, in terms of university autonomy. In Thailand, an autonomous university is a state university, where the university has more freedom to administer its own affairs in terms of governance, personnel, financial and academic management. These affairs are the key functions of the university. The university has to set up a university council, which is the highest authorising body of the university. The University Council is responsible for a variety of important affairs such as forming policies, laying down rules and regulations and monitoring the university performance. The structure of University Council is varied depending on each university bill. The university is still granted financial support from the Government every year but in the form of block grant. The university is eligible for using the budget for its operations without an approval from the Bureau of the Budget but from the University Council.

Personnel management of the university is similar to private organisations. The status of its staff is university and they are employed on a contract basis. The Personnel Committee and the University Council are responsible for setting up rules and regulations for the university personnel management.

An autonomous university has more freedom to administer its academic affairs such as opening or closing courses or programs, adjusting tuition fees, all of which is done through the Academic Affairs Board and the University Council. Academic programs are approved by the University Council based on guidelines from the Commission for Higher Education under the Ministry of Education (CHE) and accredited by the Office of the Civil Service Commission.

Good governance is an important issue for an autonomous university management. In effect of the National Education Act 1999, the university is required to develop reporting, auditing and assessment processes to ensure transparency and accountability. The University Council is responsible for developing these processes. Moreover, in order to control quality of education, the university is also required to conduct internal and external quality assessment. The internal quality assessment is conducted yearly by CHE. The external quality assessment, on the other hand, is carried out every five-year by the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (ONESQA). The reports of both internal and external quality assessment need to be sent to the University Council and related agencies as well as being made available for public access (Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Centre for Higher Education and Development & Office of the Higher Education Commission, 2010). In addition, the university must submit annual financial reports to the Office of the Auditor General of Thailand (OAG).

A greater level of autonomy enhances the university's capabilities to manage its key functions, which in turn, will help fulfil the four main missions of public autonomous university set out by the Thai Government. The four main missions consist of producing quality graduates, conducting research, providing academic services and maintaining arts and culture. Although, university autonomy is promoted as a more effective model than the bureaucratic model, the effectiveness of an autonomous university depends on how well the new model is laid down and how well the executives can manage the university under the new scheme. In other

words, effective administration can produce effective outcomes (Veerathaworn, 2006).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter presents a review of related academic literature, which contributes to the theoretical framework for the study. Several different theoretical aspects including (1) Autonomy, (2) Institutional theory, and (3) Organisational Effectiveness will be considered during this study. These themes are interrelated and contribute collectively to the development of an understanding of the issues of concern in this study.

#### **3.1 Introduction**

The theoretical framework is shaped up from the basis of the background of Thai higher education and potentially relevant literatures that may contribute to the research topic. The research explicitly focuses on the regulatory change for the Thai higher education towards a more autonomous status and how this change affects the organisational capabilities, which consequently leading to organisational effectiveness.

Educational reform, especially becoming autonomous is an important issue in Thailand. Several Thai researchers have identified the benefits and drawbacks of how becoming more autonomous may affect students and a university's administration. However, the impacts of autonomy on the effectiveness of universities have rarely been debated. In fact, the change of regulatory framework in Thai Higher Education to a more autonomy has emerged from more broadly based social and economic pressures. Such pressures challenge Thai universities to adopt new organisational forms in order to respond more effectively to the environmental shift. Like many other countries, Thai higher education is expected to produce quality graduates and develop new knowledge in order to enhance the national competitiveness, resulting in a strong demand for university quality and accountability. In addition, the new form of management is also presumed to have an effect on the university capabilities, which in turn will affect the effectiveness of the universities.

In considering the shift towards an autonomous model, the concept of autonomy as a framework is necessarily reviewed. Also, institutional

theory as a contemporary idea is useful to address the changes and developments occurred in the Thai higher educational sector. Institutional theory is an alternative view of organisational action and is based on sociological perspective. It is used to explain how the universities respond to the regulatory change, rather than the traditional perspective like organisational change (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). Moreover, institutional theory provides a good set of mechanisms that is useful for the study. In organisational management, it is inevitable to discuss administrators, as they are one of the prominent keys that manage an organisation. Their skills, beliefs and values are dominant in the given organisations. Gumpert and Sporn (1999) state that administrators play a significant role in mediating their organisations with their environments. Therefore, good leaders are supposed to arrange the fit between internal and external environment. Along with the concept of autonomy and institutional theory, the notion of organisational effectiveness and its predictors regarding higher education sector is considered under the framework. The term “effectiveness” has become significant in studies of higher education institutions and systems. “Effectiveness” is reflected through goals accomplishment established based on the demands of environments (Cameron & Whetten, 1996).

All of the aspects introduced above will be reviewed and discussed in the following section.

## **3.2 Literature review**

### **3.2.1 Autonomy**

#### *3.2.1.1 Definitions and Conceptualisation*

There have been different definitions of autonomy given by a number of researchers, which are given below.

Autonomy is defined by Ballou (1998) *“the capacity of an agent to determine its own actions through independent choice within a system of principles and laws to which the agent is dedicated”* (p. 105).



Brock (2003) defines autonomy as the degree to which one may make decisions significantly without the consent of others.

However, the perception and views on autonomy change over time, and might differ from one context to another (Ballou, 1998). Therefore, it is useful to consider different definitions of autonomy in order to have a better understanding of the term.

Autonomy can be used for both the organisation and the state. Its meaning is initially understood via political theory. The word “autonomy” originated from the Greek word “autonomia”, which means “*a state that is free to determine the norms by which it wants to live*” (Ostwald, 1982, p. 10). Previously, autonomy has been considered synonymous with the right of self-determinism, for states or individuals. This definition of self-determinism can be seen to have a wide impact over the functioning of a state, or an organisation. Even partial autonomy could have a big impact, in comparison to a state with no autonomy. At the level of an individual, living by one’s own law can be referred to as “autonomia”. This too has wider political implications, as this self-governing at individual level morphs into a wider system of self-governance with a set of principles, which include competence, decision-making, critical reflection, freedom and self-control (Ballou, 1998).

The concept of autonomy, as considered from different perspectives as it is dynamic in nature; it is a consequence of wider social and political changes taking place in a society. Various studies have considered the enduring complexity of the concept of autonomy over a period of time (“The anatomy of autonomy,” 2007; Ballou, 1998; Ostwald, 1982). Thus, it is imperative to look at individual components of autonomy, to be able to understand the fundamental issues associated with the concept, which will be discussing as follows; (Haworth, 1984, 1986).

#### *Self-governance within a system of principles*

Self-governance is the central tenet of autonomy. On an individual level, philosophers have on numerous occasions attempted to link the idea of autonomous behaviour to the morality of the subject. Thus, basically

saying that for a subject to be autonomous, it is necessary to be in accord with universally valid moral principles and laws, via his or her own actions. Though, others have considered self-governance as a right and responsibility to create a conducive environment for decision making, which is helpful in establishing control over self, and working conditions (Aydelotte, 1983; Dayani, 1990; Susman, 1976).

### *Ability, Capacity and Competence*

According to Haworth (1986), competence is the foundation of autonomy. A person strives to be able to produce intended effects and to become able to expand his/her repertoire of skills that underlies that ability. In the view of contemporary philosopher (Young, 1985), who argues that the autonomous person's capacities, beliefs and values will be identifiable as integral to him and be the source from which his actions spring. Thus, it can be stated that competency and autonomy are linked together, which means that an individual or an organisation cannot act autonomously without the competence to act autonomously. Therefore, the presence of competence is directly linked to accomplishing autonomy.

### *Decision Making*

Decision-making is also a significant theme in the concept of autonomy. Two components arise that make decision-making a component of autonomy. One is that agents have the freedom to choose how best to achieve an end or satisfy a preference. Two is that agents have the freedom to act on their choices. Individual ability to become autonomous depends on his/her capability or capacity to make choice among alternatives. Autonomy was defined by Batey and Lewis (1982), as the freedom to make discretionary and binding decisions consistent with one's scope of practice and freedom to act on those decisions without any constraints.

However, the presumption here is that the individual is in possession of 'valid information (Argyris, 1997). This means that the individual has accurate and full information, based upon which, a decision can be made. However, increasingly that is not the case, as individuals do not have accurate and full information, which means that the choice or

decision cannot be unconstrained. Therefore, in such cases, the individual making the decision is constrained by what he does not know. An individual can be considered rational when he is capable of choosing the best means to some end, depending on the information available to make the choice.

### *Critical Reflection*

A theme related to decision making is critical reflection which was described by Haworth (1986) as being sensitive to thought and to being guided by it acting on reason, reflecting on impulses and outside influence. One adopts standards, values, and principles after having critically reflected on them. Kant (as cited in Haworth, 1986) believes that actions based on desire lead to heteronomy. Kant's critics disagree by asserting that if one critically reflects on one's desires, one avoids heteronomy by assuring that one's choices are one's own. Therefore, the concept of autonomy involves the idea of authoring one's own world through reflection and decision-making and within a system of endorsed beliefs and principles.

### *Freedom*

Autonomy, in essence, means seeking independence and acting with freedom from authority. These are two essential cornerstones for fermenting an autonomous organisation. Haworth (1984) emphasises that a positive connotation of independence is one actually ruling oneself, and that self-rule does not automatically follow from freedom and independence, but only guarantees the possibility.

### *Self-Control*

Self-control is a common theme in the discussions about autonomy. Haworth (1986) mentions that autonomous persons demonstrate this capacity through full rationality and unrestricted critical competence, expressed in a continuously expanding creative life that is fully one's own. This idea brings an existing awareness of liability for self and ability to control self.

### *3.2.1.2 Autonomy and Organisations*

It is becoming increasingly clear that organisations throughout the world are striving to cope with the need for changes from the traditional management modes to the new managerialism. This new managerialism involves the application of private-sector techniques to public sector management in order to increase 'productivity'. With the new managerialism, management must have the freedom to plan, implement and measure its resources when it feels appropriate (Bottery, 2000). Especially, in large or public organisations, where bureaucratic systems still dominate, there is a shift towards flexibility in management and administration.

Centralisation is a structural feature of classical bureaucracy. The locus of decision-making is based on the top level of organisations and it is debatable as to whether it works efficiently, especially in relation to organisations such as universities, which have complex social and economic goals (Brooke, 1984). It is clear that bureaucracy is efficient for the administration of large-scale organisations; however, it may have a negative effect on routine tasks (Raub, 2008). Bureaucracy keeps the chain of command impersonal and stops favouritism, clear missions and policies for the organisations to follow will be defined clearly, and it has focused on the dominance of regulations. Such regulations cause rigidity, lack of responsiveness to client even discouragement of innovation, while not necessarily doing away with favouritism and often proving unable to develop effective policies (Adler & Borys, 1996). Even though bureaucratic structures and processes work effectively, in a broader consensus the ineffectuality of bureaucratic systems is well documented. Therefore, it is argued that the nature of bureaucracy must be replaced by flexibility and involvement (Berka, 2000; Salaman & Asch, 2003). The term "flexible" and "involvement" have been characterized by concepts of autonomy, which will be discussed as follows;

Autonomy can be observed at various levels of analysis; the autonomy of an individual in the organisation or the autonomy of organisations. At the individual level, autonomy can be referred to as the

right of an organisational member to make a decision relevant to their job without consent of other people. While, autonomy at the organisational level has been defined by (Datta, Grant, & Rajagopalan, 1991) as day-to-day freedom to manage. Harris and Holden (2001) state that the inter-relationship between autonomy and control, framing them as opposing organisational forces. The relationship between autonomy and organisation has been studied at different levels, highlighting the impact of low or high autonomy on the functioning of departments in an organisation, while also taking into account the impact autonomy has on the centralization of decision-making within an organisation (Brock, 2003). Hackman and Oldham (1976) assert that autonomy along with other factors promotes positive motivation, performance, satisfaction, absenteeism, and turnover outcomes. Therefore, autonomy not only affects the jobs directly, it also relates to important areas, which have a direct impact on organisational effectiveness.

### *3.2.1.3 Autonomy and Universities*

Universities throughout the world have been changed profoundly, due to globalisation and the rapid changes in the world. New demands of higher education have increased and this has also led to changes in their objectives. Our society and economy as such, are increasingly becoming knowledge-based. The responsibility of universities towards the nation is not only teaching students but also to provide life-long learning, which helps create a developed society and also to support producing research as centres of research. Demands for a variety of educational services such as, distance-learning courses, multidisciplinary studies, are growing rapidly (Reichert, 2009). Therefore, in order to meet new society's overall needs, the organisational structures of educational institutes have to be changed from a rigid bureaucracy toward more flexible structures. Consequently, universities are increasingly harder to manage, with fragmentation of disciplines, diversion of original goals and objectives with which they had started. A flexible structure, on the other hand, could give educational organisations an opportunity to adapt to changing demands. Moreover, it would result in creation of more nimble organisations, which are adaptive

towards the changes. The present form of organisation, with interferences from bureaucratic arm of government hampers the university's ability to adapt to the changing needs of a society (Mora, 2001).

Universities around the world have moved towards a universal system of higher education over the last thirty years, consequently they are looking at making changes to their systems of governance and management (Mora, 2001). When university governance and management become a new objective, the concept of university autonomy is inevitable to be included. There are a number of views on the autonomy of universities and it has been argued to be "*an essential prerequisite for education*" (Berka, 2000, p. 5).

Glenn (2000) states that to be an autonomous educational institution implies that it is less subject to political and bureaucratic interference, and more responsive to those it serves. In Thailand, the political influence is confined to the affluent few, and the democratisation is still at its nascent stages. Therefore, an autonomous education institution means that those without political influence have a better chance of becoming more influential stakeholders in the reformed organisation, as it attempts to become autonomous, and consequentially free from political agendas of the ruling class.

Mora (2001) defines the meaning of university autonomy as the university's ability to organise its own activities without the state consents.

Lok (2010) provides the concept of institutional autonomy as the self-governance of education institutions without political or bureaucratic interference hampering the attainment of the most important goals of education.

As indicated by these views the perception of autonomy in universities may vary from context to context and may vary over time. Thus, university autonomy might differ from country to country. Consequently, the definition of university autonomy should be made clear for particular context in order to understand the influence of context on university autonomy.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of autonomy on the effectiveness of universities in Thailand. Thus, the meaning of university autonomy should be defined within the Thai context. In the Thai context, autonomy is considered as a significant step to strengthen and develop public higher education institution, so *“autonomy in Thailand is expected to be more accountable to the public, more adaptive to educational and social needs and market demand, and more proactive and dynamic in prioritising their goals, outputs and outcomes”* (Sinthunava, 2009, p. 7)

It is believed that autonomy may be the crucial characteristic of universities (Kohtamäki, 2009). Studies indicate that growing institutional autonomy is a key to capacitate colleges to react to the challenges in an increasingly complicated and international environment (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009). Additionally, it is also believed that the issue connected with academic flexibility and institutional autonomy is generally important to understand the relationship between universities and the state (McDaniel, 1996). However, it seems that no studies make a comprehensive explanation of autonomy. This situation is partly due to nature connected with autonomy as a multi-dimensional principle in using autonomy related concepts along with various dimensions inside the same principle (Kohtamäki, 2009). Furthermore, the differences in the traditional background of numerous university systems has its influence on the interpretations of autonomy. Therefore, it would be common to determine difference of definitions provided to “institutional autonomy”.

Drawing on Estermann and Nokkala (2009)’ work, there are four basic ingredients of university autonomy consisting of governance, financial, staffing and academic issues, likewise the principle of university autonomy in Thailand. Each component will be further examined in details in the following paragraphs.

#### *Governance*

University governance is related to the capability to establish organisational structures and authorised bodies to govern the organisations. Leadership aspect is also included in this component. The power of universities to select their executive leadership is another key

indicator of the organisational autonomy. It frequently comprises numerous key staff members, such as the rector, vice-rectors, top administrators and the faculty deans. Their roles usually depend on governing bodies of the universities resulting in a deeper comprehension of the amount and characteristics of organisational autonomy.

Nevertheless, administrative framework is most likely under control of the universities. The governance framework and leadership in many cases are strongly moulded by national level regulating bodies.

#### *Financial autonomy*

Another aspect of institutional autonomy would be the scope of universities' financial autonomy. Financial autonomy can be a crucial factor allowing universities to realise their ideal goals, which mainly is the term used to determine:

- the extent to which they accumulate supplies and maintain surplus of state money;
- the power of universities setting tuition charges;
- their capacity to borrow money from the financial markets;
- their capacity to invest in financial loans; and
- their capacity to own the land as well as buildings they occupy.

Financial autonomy is obviously the area where the links to the other proportions of autonomy are greatest and can therefore hardly be regarded in isolation. Generally, it is said that universities' capacity to control fully as well as allocate their own budget internally, is an important component of their personal autonomy. Besides, the method by which funding is allocated is another important aspect that demonstrates how unbiased universities take action in relation to the particular political specialists. It would be appropriate to summarise that if there is not certain freedom to behave independently with regard to financial issues, then the other aspects of autonomy may likewise exist only in theory (Kohtamäki, 2009).

Moreover, one of the most important factors within the financial autonomy would be the method of allocation of funding by the state to the universities. It is becoming apparent how the role of the state in financing universities is diminishing (Kirtikara, 2001; McDaniel, 1996; Reichert, 2009;



Sangnapaboworn, 2003). Hence, a big burden is placed on universities to manage with less funding but with more students and larger goals. Declining state money, however, could result in greater institutional autonomy. Educational facilities with 'full autonomy' receiving a block grant allocation of funds are naturally forced to submit genuine reports on what the money continues to be spent, and statistics associated with performance as well as outputs. Consequently, autonomy is connected with accountability (Raza, 2009).

Accountability is additionally considered just as one important aspect in the governance of universities. Enders, de Boer, and Weyer (2013) comment that greater accountability includes the need of universities to redefine the ways they inform their stakeholders regarding their performance. Actually, accountability comes through a variety of channels such as; rules and regulations and accreditation systems to ensure quality expectations in order to filter access to professional careers. Furthermore, governments rely increasingly on performance-based spending, and budget allocation mechanisms (Salmi, 2007). As a result, universities should have at the very least the autonomy to raise funds as well as manage assets looking for the base goals (De Boer, Enders, & Leisyte, 2007).

#### *Staffing autonomy*

Staffing autonomy is relevant to the capability of universities to freely manage the whole range of their human resources management starting from recruitment to retirement. Estermann and Nokkala (2009) state that the ability of universities to settle on staff recruitment is actually integrally linked to their financial autonomy. The financial restrictions on staffing directly affect the opportunity to recruit the appropriate staff.

Consequently, it might be deduced that one of many important components of staffing autonomy will be the extent to which the universities have control within the financial aspects linked to their workers (Kwiek, 2008). This consists of the total salary charges and personal salary ranges, as well as the degree of flexibility the universities have in the recruitment of staff. Universities' staffing autonomy is restricted whenever the universities are generally unable to settle on their staffing policy, including recruitment routines and, salary ranges. If these aspects are set to a large degree

because of the public government bodies, the universities are left with limited capacity to regulate overall wage expenses, or prepare incentives intended for attracting premium quality staff (Kwiek, 2008).

#### *Academic autonomy*

Academic autonomy pertains, among various other matters, to universities' capability to determine their particular basic missions regarding research, teaching orientation as well as other activities including decisions regarding which actions are necessary to achieve these missions. It is fairly apparent that academic autonomy is an overarching framework for most of universities' activities and related to a variety of dimensions. The dimensions of academic autonomy can range from discover their own profiles, add or discourage programmes to student admission (Estermann & Nokkala, 2009). This is in line with Mahony (1992) who asserts that *"at the very least universities should get rid of government interference with regards to: course written content, methods connected with assessment, the conduct connected with research, the consultation of staff and the free manifestation of sights and opinions"* (p. 14).

To be concluded, all the dimensions of autonomy mentioned above specify the components to consider possible to autonomy of universities. However, the interesting question is whether these dimensions actually guarantee the absolute autonomy of universities. The answer is probably not. This is not because the components of autonomy detailed by different scholars tend to be incomplete but it rather because there is no such entirely autonomy available for universities in reality. The degree of universities' freedom is usually tied with states policies and regulations (Van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994).

Autonomy is a relative concept concerning the balance of universities' power and governments on the one hand, and administrative as well as academic career within institutions on the other (Van Vught, 1989). He/she also suggests the term *"self-regulation"* as a strategy to *"increase"* autonomy of universities in which governments relocate more power to and less control of the universities. Likewise, Salmi (2007) who comments that *"increased autonomy doesn't mean the lack of control"* (p. 226) and autonomy should not be confused with total self-reliance. It can be

widely accepted that more autonomy inside the universities can lead to their performance improvements and higher education system in general. The backbone of this argument rests on the autonomous universities having the ability to control as well as steer their particular outcomes and performance (De Boer et al., 2007; Enders et al., 2013). Thus, it is deduced that while guaranteeing institutional autonomy and academic freedom are classified as the basic requirements for the overall performance of the universities, it is generally accepted that governments feature a legitimate involvement in exercising an effect on universities (Fielden, 2008).

There are quite a few valid reasons for states to have some form of control over higher education. These include the states' duty towards research and development, for the sake of wider social good. Also, it is important that governmental resources are utilised to increase social mobility, through public service in form of education and employment. Moreover, there needs to be accountability regarding government expenditure, so that the government protects the interests of the taxpayers and students (Mora, 2001). Therefore, an argument could be made that the supervisory power of the states has some positive consequences for the higher education, as in this way larger public good is ensured. At the same time, the role of state is considered by some to be pertinent for the development of such an important service, and thus, they advocate reliance on indirect methods compatible with autonomy ("The anatomy of autonomy," 2007). Following from this, different governments have used different approaches to deal with this particular scenario, that of indirect control with semblance of autonomy. As an example, in some countries governments play a decisive role in deciding the programmes at offer, whereas in more autonomous institutions this is left to the organisation as such. Another frequently used method is that of the quality assurance criteria, where the institutions are given funding if they meet the set criterion (Askling, Bauer, & Marton, 1999; Dill, 2001; Enders et al., 2013; Estermann & Nokkala, 2009; McDaniel, 1996; Van Vught, 1989; Van Vught & Westerheijden, 1994). Consequently, it can be natural to anticipate states to possess an 'effective' function or intervention in guiding the higher

education system. However, the intervention may be harmful when it is done at the expense of the autonomy of universities.

### **3.2.2 Institutional theory**

#### *3.2.2.1 Introduction*

In today's world, organisations throughout the world have experienced political, regulatory and technological conditions that put pressures on them. Given that conditions affect capabilities of organisations to cope with such pressures to guarantee organisational survival (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). This could be the reason why organisational change has become a popular topic of organisational studies. When discussing organisational change, two main different perspectives have been widely utilised to explain the concept. First, the dominant approach, which is "technical perspective", suggests that organisations change in order to improve their performance or effectiveness. Second, an alternative perspective, which is provided by institutional theory, offers an idea that organisations change in order to achieve greater legitimacy, not more effective performances (Ashworth, Boyne, & Delbridge, 2007).

Institutional theory is based on sociological perspective and even though, it is contrasted with some other traditional organisational perspectives, it is attractive to a number of organisational scholars (Zucker, 1987). The theory is one of the magnificent theories that has been broadly used to explain organisational actions over the past few decades (Dacin, Goodstein, & Scott, 2002). As the theory is developed from a number of rigorous empirical and theoretical work, it has been increasingly become popular and powerful. The origins of institutional theory are various and its meaning is disparate depending on the emphasis and context of disciplines as it has been pursued in a variety of phenomena including, social sciences, politics and economics. Thus, it is easier to identify what it is not than what it is (DiMaggio, 1983; Scott, 2005).

According to, DiMaggio (1983), there are two concepts of institutionalisms namely "old institutionalism" and "new institutionalism" or "neo-institutionalism". These two concepts have similarities in some points, yet difference in a number of main concerns. In the earlier work, along with

informal structure and power, the central emphases were issues of influence, coalitions and competing values. In contrast with, the latter work, which the centrality of classification, routines, scripts and schema, issues of legitimacy and embeddedness of organisational field are the main focuses. The starting point of institutional theory was begun in the 1940's by the work of Weber on bureaucracy, which inspired a group of sociologists in that time; Phillip Selznick and his associates as an example. A collection of works was conducted during the 1940's, until in the 1950's; there was an obvious connection between institutions and organisations (Scott, 2008b). It had been developmental years of the insight work to emerge more complex ideas during the 1960's and 1970's, which have become a fundamental concept of the recent institutionalism called "*neo-institutionalism*".

The broader construct of institutional theory is similar to another alternative perspective, namely, "path dependency". Path dependency emphasises on the influences of a series of past sequential events contingently occurring at a particular point in time. These events determine events occurring at a later point in time (Mahony, 1992). Its mechanisms stress stabilisation of path not change and the development of institutions or organisations does not necessarily pursue efficiency but actors' interest (Pierson, 2000). However, path transformation can occur, even though, it is very unlikely, when associated with exogeneous shock (Djelic and Quack, 2007). These concepts are relatively similar to institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation under institutional perspective, which will be discussed in the following sections. Ebbinghaus also (2005) asserts that "*neo-institutionalists embraced path dependence as empirical proof of the need to study institutions as resulting from dynamic social processes*" (p.6).

#### 3.2.2.2 Neo-institutionalism

Neo-institutionalism has become well known since 1977 when Meyer and Rowan (1977) presented their work to challenge the most dominant view of open system model. While, open system model suggested that the nature of organisational change is that organisations attempt to improve their performance in order to exchange their substantive products with their environments, they argued that environmental constraints restrict

organisational capabilities to initiate changes. Subsequently, there were a number of work developed but the level of analysis was different. While, Meyer and Rowan made an argument on macro level of analysis, Lynne Zucker who was Mayer's student developed the micro level.

Thereafter, another stream of work focused on environmental perspective, was developed by DiMaggio (1983) and Meyer and Scott (1983). This perspective has become prominent especially in the sociological field. Drawing on DiMaggio (1983) which inherit from the earlier work of Meyer and Rowan (1977) the concept of institutional theory under their ideas stress on homogeneity not changes. They assert that the competitive market as a primary force provoking organisational change no longer exists. Instead, it is institutional forces stimulating changes in organisations regardless of organisational efficiency or effectiveness. Organisations are embedded in organisational fields, which are usually diverse in nature when the fields are not well defined. The uncertainty of organisational fields normally happens at the beginning stage of organisational life circle. Therefore, it is likely that organisational change would occur during this period due to the variation of the fields. However, once the fields become more mature, they will develop static characteristics, which promote homogeneity (DiMaggio, 1983; Kraatz & Zajac, 1996; Scott, 2005).

Meyer and Scott argue that both technical and institutional forces do impact on every organisation but the level of such impact is varied depending on its types (Scott, 2005). In other words, some kinds of organisations are more vulnerable to one force than the other. For example, educational organisations are more likely to experience stronger institutional pressures than industrial organisations (Scott, 2005). By "organisational fields", DiMaggio (1983) defines them as *"those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce service or product"* (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991, p. 2). The term has become a prominent concept widely used as the unit of analysis in institutional studies. The concept of organisational fields reflects comprehensive ideas of connectedness and

structural equivalence.

As mentioned above, the earlier work and ideas of institutional theory are different. They most likely depend on individual premises resulting in difficulties in inclusive discussion every assumption. Drawing on Scott's work (2005, 2008), he aggregates the various assumptions and provide a very broad definition of institutions that

*"Institutions are comprised of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive elements that, together with associated activities and resources, provide stability and meaning to social life." (Scott, 2008b, p. 48).*

According to the definition, there are three main components of institutions comprising of rules, norms and cultural-cognitive beliefs. These three elements are recognised as a symbolic system and along with associated behaviours and resources will shape institutional structures, which in turn guide behaviours and resist change (Scott, 2008b). Moreover, institutions are processes involving in institutionalisation and deinstitutionalisation and move through space over time by a variety of carriers. However, which carriers would be utilised is varied by theorists' preference depending on which elements they emphasise. These carriers are important foundations to examine institutional changes. As a result, more analysts are interested in how institutions undergo change rather than stability as stressed by the theory.

#### *The three main ingredients of institutions*

The key ingredients of institutions consist of regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive facets – Scott (2005) termed as pillars. Some theorists might favour one over the others but in general they all together contribute to institutional framework. However, each facet has its own distinction so it is useful to distinguish and discuss their characteristics, indicators and mechanisms (Scott, 2005), which will be explained as follows;

#### *Regulative element*

Most scholars stress their attention on this aspect especially, state agencies as rules maker. In institutionalism, the concept of regulation is a process attempting to capture future behaviours through establishing rules, monitoring and manipulating activities. The process could be done in both

formal and informal ways. DiMaggio (1983) suggests the concept of coercion as a mechanism of such controlling.

#### *Normative element*

Normative aspect emphasises prescription, evaluation and obligation on social life and consists of two important concepts, which are values and norms. Values are the cultural standards indicating preferable and desirable activities and behaviours. Norms are more likely about what goals or objectives need to be achieved. Thus, this system concentrates on goals and objectives defined also the appropriate pursuit of them. However, not every values and norms are pertinent to everyone in every circumstance. In some circumstances, some values and norms could only be applicable to specific actors or positions and that emerges the concept of roles, which are the conceptions of the behaviours expected of specific actors.

#### *Cultural-cognitive element*

A collective set of sociologists and organisational scholars claimed the cultural-cognitive aspect that it is *“the shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made”* (Scott, 2008b, p. 57). This aspect focuses the impact of culture, as an external environment, on how it shapes institutions. Moreover, institutions operate in multiple levels and in a variety of contexts so the actions might vary from context to context. Thus, the degree of culture supporting each actor is also different. The actors' reaction is subject to vary and depends on their cognition and interpretation of the symbols such as words and signs (Posthuma, 2009).

These three institutional elements are transported from time to time through a diversity of carriers. These carriers convey the ideas, thought and concept through space over time and they have an effect on the nature of the messages. The subject of carriers is related to a number of descriptions. Such descriptions could be new technologies, innovation, and adoption of reform et cetera. Scott (2008b) identifies four kinds of institutional carriers including symbolic systems, relational systems, routines and artefacts. Symbolic systems operate in the form of rules, norms, values, scripts and schema in order to guide behaviours. Relational systems function through the concept of role systems and lie across organisational boundaries. This



can lead to structural isomorphism or structural equivalence. Routines are associated with repetitive activities reflecting actors' tacit knowledge resulting in behavioural stability in organisation. Artefacts are referred to "material culture" created by human that once they are embodied, they become meaningful. In more recent sense, artefacts can also be referred to technologies. Moreover, artefacts can add value into particular ideas so more actors will adopt such ideas. Consequently, new set of standards is created. However, in many circumstances, the ideas and message do not just move and have been told but they are edited, changed, integrated and finally transformed to new meanings (Scott, 2008a).

Taking into consideration the statement above, it can be seen that organisations are encompassed by institutional environments, which penetrate institutional features across organisational boundaries. Such environments are bounded by cultural elements permeated into organisations in the form of "taken-for-granted" behaviours and established rules as templates for them. However, given institutional contexts could constrain and support organisations in different ways as institutional elements are conveyed over time. They are also interpreted, integrated and blended with some other ideas and finally be transformed by various carriers and actors. Therefore, organisations might adopt new structures that comply with their environment or they might respond to their environment by developing alternative strategies (DiMaggio, 1983; Scott, 2005; Zucker, 1987).

### *3.2.2.3 Institutional isomorphism*

As discussed prior, under the perspective of institutional theory, even though there are two types of isomorphism which are institutional and competitive isomorphism, the primary objective of organisations is to obtain legitimacy not to increase performance. Legitimacy is "*a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions.*" (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). The easiest way for an organisation to receive legitimacy is to conform to institutional environmental demands. In doing this, organisations will be securely

insured their reputation, acceptability and public recognisability, which are more vital than directly improving technical performances or effectiveness (Scott, 2005). Such environmental demands push organisations in a field to adopt similar structures even though they are emerged differently. This situation is termed as “institutional isomorphism” by DiMaggio (1983). The competitive isomorphism may exist in an organisational field where organisations within such field can freely, widely and openly compete and may not adequate to capture organisations in today’s world (DiMaggio, 1983). Hawley (1968) describes isomorphism that *“isomorphism is a constraining process that forces one unit in a population to resemble other units that face the same set of environmental conditions”* (Hawley, 1968 as cited in DiMaggio & Powell, 1983 p. 149). Moreover, Ebbinghaus (2005) claims that institutional scholars in different disciplines identify path dependent self-reinforcing processes as social mechanisms stabilising institutions and encouraging institutional change. Self-reinforcing processes can be fostered by the diffusion of technological standard, network of actors, feedback effects from consequences and internationalisation (Ebbinghaus, 2005; Djelic & Quack, 2007; Deeg, 2001). These mechanisms similarly work to the isomorphic mechanisms of DiMaggio. However, they give attention to internal dynamics leading to alteration of actors’ perception of need for change (Deeg, 2001). Therefore, change initiated in this sense is highly related to interests of actors and not purely related to exogenous pressures.

The insight knowledge and assumptions of isomorphism were first introduced by DiMaggio (1983), which have become the dominant work to date. According to their work, there are three mechanisms that pressure organisations to face institutional isomorphism consisting of normative, coercive and mimetic. Each mechanism has its own distinctions, which are potential to identify predictors of isomorphic change. Acknowledging the isomorphic change predictors contributes to understanding why some organisations are responsive to pressures, while others are intractable.

#### *Normative pressures*

Normative pressures are the influence of professionalisation and its networks on organisations. The antecedence of the forces is education and training from professional centres, such as universities or others

professional agencies. These professional groupings share a similar orientation. They also shape institutional forms by creating standards, values and accrediting certifications. Moreover, they expand such institutional forms across organisations through their communities or networks. The diffusion of institutions accelerates homogeneity over organisational fields as organisations are induced to conform to the institutional forms in order to be recognised as legitimate organisations. With the effects of normative forces, organisations that dependently recruit their employees on academic qualification and professional communities are more likely to become similar to other organisations in their field (Ashworth et al., 2009; DiMaggio, 1983; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

#### *Coercive pressures*

Coercive pressures are forces derived from external environment that deploy into organisations either in formal or informal ways. Normally, the pressures come in the form of state regulations, laws, and societal expectations or even from other dominant organisations, which coerce, convince or invite organisations to develop desirable structures. This type of force strongly reflects the nature of organisational change under the perspective of institutional theory, which underlines the prominence of political effects rather than technical effects. Thus, organisations that rely heavily on other organisations or on the same resources tend to adopt identical structures as the organisations they depend on (DiMaggio, 1983).

#### *Mimetic pressure*

Mimetic pressures are forces that usually occur when organisations are experiencing uncertain circumstances. Such circumstances could be due to goal ambiguity or deficient technologies and solutions become problematic. Given these situations, organisations tend to mimic structures, systems or activities of other similar organisations they perceive as prestigious or successful organisations without any proof of greater performance (Ashworth et al., 2009).

In addition, DiMaggio (1983) also illustrates the assumptions of isomorphic change under the field-level predictors, which take the aspects of resource dependency, transaction with state agencies, a variety of organisational models, technology unpredictability, professionalisation

process and structuration of an organisational field in to account. They claim that the higher degree of those aspects occurring within a field, the greater level of isomorphism.

Moreover, it is important to bear in mind that institutional pressures do not only constrain organisations and organisational fields by creating pattern for them but also individual level by influencing the way of thought. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) confirm this view in their statement that *“to the extent managers and key staff are drawn from the same universities and filtered in a common set of attributes, they will tend to view problems in a similar fashion, see the same policies, procedures, and structures as normatively sanctioned and legitimized, and approach decisions in much the same way”* (p, 72).

In conclusion, these pressures are bound to have an effect on isomorphism of individual, organisations and organisational fields. The influence of isomorphism is expected to encompass organisational main features. Frumkin and Galaskiewicz (2004) argue that the only institutional mechanism that associates with environment of organisational fields is coercive forces. The other two mechanisms are related to roles and structures within the fields. However, conforming to such pressures do not guarantee organisational effectiveness in technical way. Being recognised as legitimate or prestigious organisations in public opinions is the explicit benefit of being similar to other organisations. Though, organisational effectiveness could be reinforced in the easier forms of attracting quality staff, accessing to vital resources and contacting with other organisations when compared with those who do not obtain legitimacy (Ashworth et al., 2009; DiMaggio, 1983; Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004).

#### *3.2.2.4 Institutional theory and organisational change*

Institutional theory is the theory that stresses the impact of environment on organisational fields. An organisational field is surrounded by its environment, which contains of institutional features such as norms, values, regulations, societal expectations et cetera. These institutional features can be presented whether formal or informal forms and are bound to have an effect on organisations within the field. Such institutional features

diffuse across the field boundaries resulting in connectedness of organisations. Once organisations are tied together, they seem to share agreement, awareness and information through the network leading them to become legitimated patterned. A number of scholars arguing that when organisations face fragmented or uncertain situations – conflicts between various authorities, goal ambiguity are examples – they have a tendency to increase their internal stability by advancing routines and internal structures (Hanson, 2001). Given these circumstances, organisations are restricted their ability to change and more likely to be solid.

Even though, institutional theory emphasises on the environment that constrains and limits organisational capability to change, it cannot be concluded that changes will not be occurred. Scott (2008) and Scott and his associates (2000) assert a strong statement confirming that organisational fields could be problematic and weak. This situation allows other institutional features to permeate into the fields and that causes varying set of behaviours. Though, social mechanisms determining institutional change are at beginning stage of institutional study (Trondal, 2002).

*“While fields provide a framework for locating and bounding the phenomena of interest, we must not assume that they are not problematic and unchanging”* (Scott, Ruef, Mendel, & Caronna, 2000, p. 13).

In regard to institutional change, this claim is in line with Ashworth and his associates (2009) who state that

*“The possibility of change is identified and associated with the opportunities created by various antecedents of deinstitutionalization following which institutional norms may be challenged”* (Ashworth et al., 2009, p. 168).

The concept of “agency” plays a significant role in contributing to institutional change as it captures ability of an actor to make a difference, which is meaningful in the social world (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Oliver, 1991; Scott, 2008b). Agency is one of the essential institutional constructs. Thus, even though institutions constrain agency’ behaviours, it also empowers agency in the institutional processes (Scott, 2005). In other words, even though institutions formulate actors through rules, norms and beliefs, they are capable of reformulating those institutional features.

Therefore, the models of institutional processes can be both “top-down” and “bottom-up” (Scott, Ruef, Mendel, & Caronna, 2001).

Drawing on DiMaggio and Powell (1991), organisations function in what they term “institutional spheres” where rules, power and action are generated. Thus, the institutional spheres are the important and powerful sources of institutions including internal structure of the organisation, a collection of organisation in the organisational field and the state. These three contexts are constrained by institutions, simultaneously; they have a remarkable power to change, create a new set of logics for organisational fields. However, there are four conditions that might prevent or encourage actors to perform organisational change. Such conditions consist of the role of internal structure, existing strategies and power of organisations, actors and interests, the role of new organisations as models for other organisations and institutionalisation forces.

Although, internal structure such as existing goals, strategies, systems and characteristics restricts organisational action, organisational authority can enhance changes by altering, transforming or editing those institutional limits if it is in their interest. Regarding the term “authority”, there are two types of them (DiMaggio, 1983; Scott, 1987). One is the formal authority refers to those who have hierarchical power as structured in organisational structure. The other is informal authority, who does not have official position but is authorised power to allocate resources of the organisation. Therefore, power and interest of actors are essential to initiate changes.

The second context is organisational field – its meaning has been discussed prior – where a set of organisations operate in and is constrained by institutions. It is notified that the field is controlled by an individual organisation or a collection of organisations on the basis of their size and cooperation. In other words, the bigger size and the greater degree of cooperation in organisation, the more powerful the organisation is in determining other organisations in the field.

The third one is the state, which is considered as the most influential sources of institutions because it can regulate any organisational field without being a member by establishing rules and creating legitimisation,

which could limit the organisational action (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). However, the state can at the same time empower authority to innovate institutions (Scott, 2008b).

Additionally, beside the combination work of the three contexts and the four conditions, there is another condition, which is shock that stimulates organisational change in a mature field. In a well-established field, where organisations are profoundly structured by institutions (Kraatz & Zajac, 1996), shock is crucial to be used to stimulate actors' perception of need for change (Hanson, 2001). The state and organisational field are the fundamental sources that bring about the shock in order to alter the rules (Hanson, 2001). Here, the process of institutionalisation will begin again when an organisation or a collection of organisations performs change and they yield excellent outcomes. This will strike the perception of need for change of other organisations' actors to follow such change even though the successful result could not be guaranteed (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Once an adequate number of organisations adopt the change, the new logics will be institutionalised and diffused across the organisational field, which eventually, will be defined as desirable alternative logics for organisations within the field. Environmental shocks are involved in radical change due to its serious condition. The shocks could be taken place by considerable shift of laws, technology and societal expectation. When organisational field experiences the dramatic shocks, the institutions in the field seem to be vulnerable causing undermining of public confidence. As a consequence, major change tends to be taken place.

#### *3.2.2.5 Institutionalism and public sector (Higher education)*

It is notable that organisations do not experience the same level of institutional pressures. One might be influenced by isomorphism heavier than others (Kraatz & Zajac, 1996). Especially, public organisations, which are non-profit organisations, they are considered as key players in precipitating institutionalisation into other organisations and cause homogeneity (Davis & Powell, 1992). They are more likely to be subjects of isomorphism rather than objects by establishing regulations for, accrediting, allocating funds and resources for, monitoring performance of other

organisations. The reason that these organisations are more susceptible to institutional forces than profit organisations is because they do not have owners, who monitors benefit of the organisations nor tangible organisational goals and performance (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004). Such conditions cause complications for the non-profit organisations. Therefore, in order to avoid uncertainty and obtain accountability and legitimacy, they tend to embrace external key stakeholders' opinion and adopt their structures to comply with the stakeholders' expectations (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004; Hanson, 2001). The idea is supported by Frumkin and Galaskiewicz' work published in 2004 under the title of "Institutional isomorphism and Public sector organizations". They found that governmental organisations are in fact more vulnerable to coercive, normative and mimetic forces than other organisations.

The Higher education sector is no exception to experience the greater level of isomorphism as it is also recognised as non-profit organisation and is under the same complicated situations. Goals of education organisations are ambiguous and difficult to be clearly defined (Hanson, 2006). Moreover, educational organisations are in public interest because they are a prominent source of new knowledge and are one of the important factors to enhance national competitiveness. As a result, society has high expectation of such organisations. Therefore, key stakeholders who support and fund the organisations such as; state, students, parents and associated organisations have made efforts to define the desirable goals for the education organisations in order to avoid public scepticism. The integrity of such diverse goals leads to the mission burden of higher education, which resource supports are performance-based. Responding to those stakeholders' norms, values and beliefs may interfere with existing norms, values and beliefs embedded in universities. This circumstance put the universities under pressure to prioritise such environmental demands because obeying to one demand may invalidate others (Davis & Powell, 1992; Dill, 1999; Gumpert & Sporn, 1999; Kraatz & Zajac, 1996). In this situation, the universities are more likely to conform to the demands they feel will most secure their survival (Scott, 2005).



### *3.2.2.6 Institutional complexity*

Institutional logics are predominately standards and rules that set the understanding and analysis of what is appropriate behaviour and how to prosper within an organisation (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Binder, 2007; Thornton, Jones, & Kury, 2005). These logics help the organisation to operate within a social world and perform according to the set logics that may from time to time form an opposing opinion. These logics may also become a confrontation when it appears not to be suitable or contradictory to what the organisation is subjected to (Greenwood, Raynard, Kodeih, Micelotta, & Lounsbury, 2011). Scott (2008a), claims that frequently organisations are confronted with various compatible and incompatible logics, which eventually bring stress and complexity to the exposed organisations. For example, the situation in which academic science and commerce logics in a university are opposed to each other and yet find places of common interest. Not only is the institution faced with complexities such as these but it also experiences complexities from those who represent the different professions, each with its own cognitive and prescriptive system (Greenwood et al., 2011).

Scott's claim is in consistent with Meyer and Rowan (1977) who believe that organisations find themselves confronting not only socio-cultural but also commercial expectations, which are incompatible in their nature. When organisations are faced with institutional complexity, it is accepted they are dealing with incompatible requirements as per multiple institutional logics (Dunn & Jones, 2010; Greenwood, Díaz, Li, & Lorente, 2010). These expectations of external players may put the organisations in a challenging perspective as these demanding environments may not be systematically intertwined. Several studies are also found institutional complexity in the other different frameworks including that of the differences in "roles, skills, practices, protocols, performance criteria" (Greenwood et al., 2011, p. 322). Moreover, Pache and Santos (2010a) argue that institutional complexity can happen when means and goals are incompatible. Then, an interesting question would be how these

organisations experience and deal with these incompatible and socially derived demands.

Therefore, understanding institutional complexity of organisations is crucial as the organisations perceive and encounter such complexity in dissimilar degree and this experience influences their response (Fiss & Zajac, 2004; Kim, Shin, Oh, & Jeong, 2007). For example, educational service is likely to be more susceptible than other types of organisations due to a wide range of stakeholders (Dunn & Jones, 2010; Meyer & Rowan, 2006). The responses these organisations exhibit have a considerable impact and serious inferences on social and legitimacy acceptance and its access to vital resources, which in turn will have an effect on their survival (Oliver, 1991; Pache & Santos, 2010a, 2013b).

A number of scholars affirm that institutional complexity is never stable and a continual process (Hoffman, 1999; Reay & Hinings, 2005). This is because, from time to time, social environments bring on new ideas and institutional logics. These new logics more or less have an effect on existing ones because they are ultimately transmitted and blended or even replace the existing ones by entrepreneurial actors depending on their interests (Fiss, 2008; Lok, 2010). Consequently, organisations never succeed in regulating institutional complexity but learn how to respond to it effectively.

Greenwood and his associates (2011) have developed a useful framework to examine the degree of institutional complexity. They draw on the arrays of earlier empirical studies confirming that organisations do not experience the same level of institutional complexity (Greenwood et al., 2011). In this framework, the characteristics of field structure and organisations themselves are indicated as main factors determining the extent of institutional complexity of the organisations. The nature of organisational field is confirmed by a vast number of predominant institutionalists that it is associated with the extent to which organisations within the given field challenged by institutional complexity (Dacin, Munir, & Tracey, 2010; Scott, 2008a). Institutional complexity tends to be lower in mature fields than emerging fields because they are more stable in nature. This is because multiple logics in mature fields are prioritised, which leaves

only a dominant logic into play. Whilst, emerging fields are totally opposite (Lounsbury, 2007; Purdy & Gray, 2009).

Field structure is divided into fragmentation, rationalisation and centralisation. On the other hand, organisational characteristic factors are related to position of organisations within given fields, decision processes, ownership/governance and identity.

Field fragmentation refers to an organisational field where a number of different constituents present uncorrelated institutional logics. Each of them prefers disparate set of prescriptions and has control over legitimacy and vital resources of the organisations within the given field. These contrasting preferences are believed to add on complexity to the organisations (Meyer, Scott, & Strang, 1987).

Unlike field fragmentation, rationalisation refers to the demands being formal or more informally systematised. Formalisation is assumed to have an effect on how organisations perceive institutional complexity yet the direction remains unidentified (Greenwood et al., 2010). Greenwood et al. (2011) argue that more formalised structure of institutional demands is more clearly specified and noticeable. Thus, it might be easier for the organisations to deliberately address the institutional demands. However, Goodrick and Salancik (1996) and Thornton and Ocasio (2008) provide an interesting alternative view. They suggest that while low formalisation may increase an organisation's discretion available due to the weakness of given demands, greater formalisation is suspected to restrict options of the organisations when dealing with multiple demands. This could be due to the strength of formalised structure.

The last aspect of field structure is centralisation. Centralisation is the dimension relevant to the "*hierarchical power structure of institutional constituents*" (Greenwood et al., 2011, p. 337). The framework suggests that centralisation tends to alleviate institutional complexity of organisations. This is because institutional logics in a highly centralised organisational field become standardised and well-defined by the authoritative power in the field. Thus, anything vague and ambiguity will be clearly defined and/or

prioritised by the most dominant constituents at the field level before transmitting to the organisation level (Greenwood et al., 2010). Those constituents exercise their power through use of law reinforcement, control over resources and professionalism (Greenwood, Suddaby, & Hinings, 2002; Holm, 1995; Ruef & Scott, 1998).

Even though, fragmentation itself may arise the level of complexity, a study conducted by Pache and Santos (2010a) has revealed some compelling insights in relation to field-level complexity. They studied the linkage between fragmentation and centralisation degree of an organisational field and found that fragmented field with moderate degree of centralisation was the most complicated organisational field. They referred such field structure as an organisational field, which is *“characterized by the competing influence of multiple and misaligned players whose influence is not dominant yet is potent enough to be imposed on organizations”* (Pache & Santos, 2010a, p. 458). Organisations located in this moderately centralised field are likely to experience persistent institutional complexity because it lacks of predominant constituents who have enough power to address the conflicts. Yet each constituent has enough power to manipulate organisational behaviour (Lounsbury, 2007; Marquis & Lounsbury, 2007; Pache & Santos, 2010a; Reay & Hinings, 2009).

The next component of the framework attributing to institutional complexity experiences of organisations and their potential responses are organisational characteristics. Such characteristics comprise of field position, structure, ownership/governance and identity.

To begin with, field position is relevant to a consideration of position of an organisation within a given field either it is periphery or centre. A stream of researches illustrate that field position is bound to have an effect on organisational perception of institutional complexity and thus, in turn, have an effect on how organisations will react to such complexity (Kim et al., 2007; King, 2008; Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001). Peripheral organisations are admitted to perceive lower level of complexity than central organisations due to their loose connectedness with other members whose institutional

prescriptions have already embedded in their behaviour (Kraatz, 1998). They also appear less visible to be targeted by mass media and institutional constituencies (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001). Because of these reasons, these organisations tend to have a wider range of options to react when encountered by complexity. However, the downside of peripheral organisations is that their existence is usually overlooked resulting in absence of resources and supports (Leblebici, Salancik, Copay, & King, 1991). Therefore, when their survival is severely challenged, they have a high tendency to leave institutionalised scripts (D'aunno, Succi, & Alexander, 2000).

Central organisations, on the other hand, are likely to be constrained by institutional prescriptions due to a tighter connectedness with other organisations in the field and media attraction (Ahmadjian & Robinson, 2001). As a result, they might experience a higher level of complexity. To be considered as a central organisation, size and status of the organisation are the key indicators. In general, size is related to age of the organisation, while status is more correlated with its reputation (Greenwood et al., 2011). Size and reputation are matter in this context as they might help organisations to buffer against tension of external demands (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). In other words, the larger and higher reputation organisations are, the more they are capable to have control over resources and bargain with external demands, especially the ones they perceive as threats to their positions. Therefore, even though, central organisations are more likely to be pressurised by institutional complexity, they are more tolerant of such complexity.

Next, structure in this sense is reflected through the decision processes of an organisation. Based on the foundation that institutional logics are transmitted over time by a variety of carriers and one of them is actors (Scott, 2008b). Those logics are permeated into organisations after their meanings and priority are given by actors of the organisations (Pache & Santos, 2010b). Considered together, therefore, organisational decision bringing any logic into the organisations is a result of expected outcomes and preferences of those actors (D'Aunno, Sutton, & Price, 1991). The

authors of the framework aggregated these empirical evidences then provided an interesting assumption. They argued that organisations with the sheer number of internal communities will experience a higher level of complexity and that will also have a potential impact on their responses (Greenwood et al., 2011). This is because each of those actors have their preferences and expectations, which most of the time are so different from each other depending on their interests (Lounsbury, 2001; Westphal & Zajac, 2001). When many people prescribe many separate logics for an organisation to pursue, it can raise the complexity level of the organisation.

The third composition of organisational characteristics factor is ownership/governance. While, the structure component is concerned participation of actors in giving voice to particular logics, ownership is more involved in power of those actors rather than who own organisations. Power in this context refers to the most powerful group of those actors who have control over the organisations. They are also capable to prioritise multiple logics and direct the way to respond to those conflicting demands based on their interests. For example, public universities tend to align their organisations with government demands because they are the major source of funds (Lounsbury, 2001).

Not only does the power of actors have an effect on institutional complexity of organisations but also the governance role. It is empirically accepted that the functional expertise of those who govern the organisations is associated with the organisational regulatory context (Greenwood et al., 2011). Such individually expert background will influence their perception of particular logics that are in line with their area of expertise, then adhere to their decisions.

The last aspect of organisational filter is identity. It is the other important issue concerned to determine institutional complexity of organisations. Kraatz and Block (2008) assert that organisational behaviour can only be accelerated when a certain logic is clearly prioritised. Identity in this context can be considered both at institutional and organisational level. Though the focus at institutional level is distinguished from organisational level. Belonging to an institutionally social group and successfully present it

in such the way is the primary concern of identity at institutional level (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Whereas, the central focus at organisational level is differentiation from other organisations, especially those that are in the same group (King, Clemens, & Fry, 2011; Whetten, 2006).

To be recognised as a legitimate organisation, the organisation must conform to its institutional context and behave in a similar fashion as others of a particular social group. Therefore, lack of fit with its claimed group inhibits options of the organisation to respond to institutional complexity because institutional identities form organisational perception of and respond to complexity (Greenwood et al., 2011). However, organisations not only strive to become similar to other organisations, they also endeavour to differentiate themselves from the others in some fashions. This allows the organisations to build and/or maintain their prestige to enhance their chance of resources acquisition (King et al., 2011). Thus, when encountered by institutional complexity, self-definition will shape how organisations prioritise competing demands, which ultimately, influence potential responses (Greenwood et al., 2011; King et al., 2011).

### *3.2.2.7 The Impact of institutional complexity*

According to the earlier discussion above, many organisations face institutional pluralism when they function within what Kraatz and Block call “multiple institutional spheres” (Kraatz & Block, 2008, p. 2). Such organisations suffer from collective regulatory systems also a several embodied cultural logic differences. Therefore, these organisations tend to hold a variety of institutional identities derived from their diverse environment and that creates deep tensions within the organisations (D’unno et al., 2000; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Heimer, 1999).

Despite being widely accepted that many organisations face imbedded pluralistic demands, there is a minimal amount of empirical evidence assessing the practical and speculative implications. A pioneering work in regard to difficulties and opportunities of organisations operate in such environment and their adaptation was developed by Kraatz and Block in 2008, namely, “*Organizational Implications of Institutional Pluralism*”. The

work was grounded from the fundamental perspective of neo-institutionalism that of institutions as external pressures shape organisational behaviour (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Thus, if pluralism and cognitive institutionalism are combined, the more organisations are seen as accepting collective logics they may be very well perceived as many things to many people. The potential effects of pluralism include fragmentation, ambiguity and instability both at field and organisational level (Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014; Pache, 2012). Nevertheless, the authors also suggest possible opportunities of pluralistic organisations. They claim that smart and expert organisations are capable of concurrently satisfying various demands imposed by different constituencies at least partially to meet a minimum requirement just to maintain their survival (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Drawing on this dedicated piece of work, the concepts of organisational legitimacy, organisational governance and organisational change, purely as neo-institutional perspective, may become problematic when applying pluralism to them. When these problems are addressed and possible explanations are explored, it becomes a debatable issue in its application in pluralistic conditions (Kraatz & Block, 2008).

Suchman (1995) aggregates and incorporates a variety of legitimacy definitions given by various scholars. He/she then provides a broad definition of legitimacy as *“a generalized perception or assumption that the actions of an entity are desirable, proper, or appropriate, within some socially constructed system of norms, values, beliefs, and definitions”* (Suchman, 1995, p. 574). According to the definition, it can be seen that organisations seek social acceptance and furthermore this is purely based on a symbolic conformity on cultural directions. Although this might seem to be a platform for understanding of this concept, major problems are found when attempting to apply in pluralistic contexts. In these conditions, organisational legitimacy demands not only symbolic compliance with cultural norms and expectations but also more is expected. This is because organisations located in pluralistic context are forced to symbolically commit to diverse institutionally derived identities. However, they can only do so when a particular identity is prioritised (Heimer, 1999). Thus, they must first figure out what value they favour and who they want to be (Whetten, 2006).



After they know exactly what identity they are going to hold on, the appropriate behaviour can then be initiated (Kraatz & Block, 2008).

Moreover, it is not quite possible for these organisations to pull apart the different institutional identity from each other because legitimacy should be considered as the entire organisation rather than in parts (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Therefore, if legitimacy is crucial for organisational survival and these organisations want to be recognised as legitimate organisations, they cannot just obey to only a single logic and deny others. Otherwise, they would get scrutinised by those who are neglected (Glynn, 2000; Pache & Santos, 2013b). The other challenge of pluralistic organisations is an increase in degree of internal conflict. They have a high tendency of confrontation between internal constituencies in organisational decision process as each of them hold different beliefs and have their own preferences for doing things (Glynn, 2000). Pluralistic organisations are also encountered commitment problem. They are not only required to symbolically comply with institutional environments but also present their commitment to do so. Nevertheless, their history and origins play a meaningful role to constrain their behaviour. As DiMaggio (1983) mentions, organisations are prisoner of *iron cage*. Thus, in a pluralistic context they often find it difficult to commit to a variety of institutionalised systems and that leaves them with a feeling of uncertainty.

The next major problem of pluralistic organisations is organisational governance, which relates to control over organisations. Organisational governance pays attention on the organisations' actors who have power to identify organisational goals and activities to pursue the goals (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Much of the early work on institutional theory explained the fact and provided some insights of organisational governance (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 2000; Scott et al., 2001; Selznick, 1996). They agreed that governance took place outside organisations' boundaries (Selznick, 1996). Field-level actors such as states and profession greatly shaped organisational structures and actions (Scott, 2000; Scott et al., 2001). These constituencies also established organisational identities, structures and practices base on cultural cognitive mechanisms rather than coercive or

normative mechanisms (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). However, institutional logics change over time due to social movements that can affect organisational goals and structures too. Organisations may not be able to sustain a distinct form of governance throughout their lives. Rather, they need to validate diverse institutional logics exposed by such pluralistic environment (Kraatz & Block, 2008).

The last problem of pluralism on organisations is organisational change. First of all, pluralism has an effect on meaning of organisational change due to multiple constituencies. These actors give meaning of change differently and thus they require different symbolic compliance. Consequently, showing good congruence with one meaning may display incongruence with others. Organisational history and uniqueness are also as important as the given meaning of change when an organisation comes to perform any changes. This is because in pluralistic environment, change is not only about the prescriptions of exogenous constituencies but also the claimed norms and values of the organisation itself. Therefore, it is vital for the organisation to ask whether the given change fit its cultural tradition. Otherwise, balance of integrated identities of the organisation may be in jeopardy.

In addition, even though, pluralism makes change less difficult than it should be if considered under neo-institutional perspective, it often creates uncontrolled change and what Selznick (2011) regards as “*opportunistic adaptation*”. Opportunistic adaptation refers to any changes initiated without deliberate calculations of organisational competencies and potential consequences in a long run (Selznick, 2011). An endeavour to please institutional constituencies and benefit seeking are traps of such opportunistic change (Kraatz & Block, 2008; Selznick, 2011). Kraatz and Block (2008) provide a very interesting insight regarding the uncontrolled change of organisations. They argue that even though pluralism stimulates organisations to act autonomously, its tension strikes organisations to escape the myth of “*iron cage*” and follow the cultural system. As a result, it is common to sometimes see organisations perform changes by accident.

The consequences of changes described above are extortionate. When these types of changes occur, organisations are likely to lose their independence and fail to preserve their unique identities. Instead, they open a broad chance for external forces to excessively influence their policies and practices (Selznick, 2011). Up to this point, it leaves to a robust role of leadership as change agents to control organisational change processes out of the failure trap. If they are able to do so, it will allow organisations to be transformed intelligently and effectively (Kraatz, 2009; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Selznick, 2011).

#### *3.2.2.8 Organisational responses to institutional complexity*

After the discussion of how competing logics are exposed and the potential problems of pluralistic context on organisations, this section rather aims at their possible responses to such complexity. Previous researchers have done studies on institutionalisation. Valuable emphasis has been placed on the correlation between organisations and functioning of their environment (Oliver, 1991). A number of these studies share a very similar perspective of multiplicity of externally institutional demands exposed to organisations (D'aunno et al., 2000; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Heimer, 1999; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). They acknowledge that frequently organisations are embedded in pluralistic environment where they are surrounded by multiple and competing logics. While old institutional theory gives an overview of institutions as sources of homogeneity and stresses the importance of conformity to institutional demands, the newer version of the theory offers a wider range of institutional processes. It gives an attention on organisational self-interest and active agency as variables of determining alternative strategic responses to institutional pressures of organisations (Kraatz & Block, 2008; Oliver, 1991; Pache & Santos, 2010b).

A model of strategic responses was pioneered by Oliver (1991), which highlights behaviour and conditions of organisations to oppose institutionalisation. This model has become the classification of organisational responses to institutional pressures (Pache & Santos, 2010b). It is also an antecedent of the later useful framework of organisational responses to multiple and competing institutional demands.

Such an example is the model of Kraatz and Block (2008). Therefore, it is a worth cost to review Oliver's model as the foundation for dynamic content of organisational strategic responses.

Oliver (1991) studies the concurrent perception of institutional as well as resource dependence theories and further demonstrates a range of organisational strategic response starting from passive conformity to active resistant. The differences of these two theories clearly indicate a diverse responsiveness either by choice, awareness and institutional self-interest when it comes to external restrictions. Resource dependence theory focuses more on the choice of behaviour and attitudes in controlling sources and resources. Institutional theory however restricts their predictions to structural and procedural environmental conformity. Yet, both agree on possibility of organisational choice for obtaining the ultimate outcomes, which are stability and legitimacy. According to Oliver (1991), there are five categories of strategic responses consisting of acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance and manipulation.

Acquiescence takes form in three different tactics such as habit, imitation and compliance. These three tactics vary depending on level of consciousness of organisations when responding to external pressures. Habit refers to an oblivious acceptance of institutionally socialised standards and rules and will reproduce previous historically repeated actions. Imitations refer to either unconscious or unknown following of another organisation based on their visual success and consulting agents. This tactic is likely to be adopted when organisations experience uncertainty. There is a high tendency for them to follow other known and trusted actors or organisations (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). While, habit and imitation are considered as unaware responses, compliance is entirely different than those two. Compliance is the tactic in which organisations are fully aware of their choices made to comply with taken for granted prescriptions in order to serve their own sake and interests. This is apparent in a situation where the organisations want to avoid scrutiny of their activities from institutional referents, which can comfort their stability and legitimacy.

Organisations, when confronted by conflicting expectations or disparity in expectations efficiency and autonomy, may want to adopt a compromise strategy. Three tactics are categorised under this strategy including balancing, pacifying and bargaining. Many organisations feel that compromising will bring a form of balance or amelioration with external components and members. Balancing may be seen as the perfect parity-achieving chip among stakeholders and internal interests. Pacifying tactics however may be a better solution as it gives the organisation a better resistance platform to at least conform to minimum requirements so as to not be seen as “bite the feeding hand” (Oliver, 1991, p. 154). Bargaining tactic is more proactive than the other two. Organisations choose to promote and pursue their interests by negotiating with institutional referents to lessen standards and expectations. Adopting this tactic, organisations can show a form of partial compliance to their institutional constituencies so that their legitimacy is remained.

The third strategy under this model is avoidance. The tactics under this strategy consist of concealment, buffering and escape. Even though, concealment and buffering are different, they have a similar fashion. That is to avoid elaborate assessment of institutional constituencies by presenting symbolic compliance without any intention to implement institutional prescriptions. It might be in the form of window-dressing or decoupling internal practices from their formal structure. Theoretically, these tactics are believed to sufficiently satisfy those constituencies and that means the organisations can keep their legitimacy safe. Escape is totally unlike concealment and buffering as it is involved with altering the domain when goals and activities of organisations are severely challenged by institutional pressures.

Defiance is the fourth organisational response defined by Oliver (1991). Dismissing, challenge and attack are sub-forms of defiance. Organisations are likely to ignore institutional prescriptions when they perceive relatively low threat of institutions. They may prefer not to adhere to affirmative action requirements purely on the pretence that getting caught is relatively low. Challenge and attack are quite similar forms. Though, the

latter is more aggressive and intense. Organisations are likely to exercise challenge tactic when they recognise their beliefs are significantly appropriate than the ones in cultural system. Challenge as a response, could be more effective though, if it can be rationally argued with integrity. Some organisations may even feel that their own rationale may be more above approach than the standards set out by government. When institutional pressures particularly threaten organisational freedom or advantages, organisations have a high tendency to choose attack tactic against such pressures.

The last strategic response is manipulation. Manipulation is the strategy in which organisations attempts to manoeuvre institutional demands imposed on them. Organisations may exercise co-opt, influence and control tactics to address with these pressures. Co-optation tactic is related to getting external recruitment to support organisational projects. For instance, organisations may invite one or more institutional referents to join organisational constitution. This can create a link between the institutional coalitions, which Oliver believed it could enhance organisational legitimacy. Influence tactics, on the other hand, are involved with efforts of organisations to influence institutionally derived standards used against organisational performance. Controlling is the most aggressive strategy set out by Oliver (1991). It is the tactics in which organisations are trying to be dominant over institutional referents that exert pressures on them. The likelihood of organisations to exercise controlling tactics is when their recognition in the strength of institutional pressures is low.

Oliver also draws further suggestions based on her study that all future research should be based on empirical studies on her suggested hypotheses. Surveys could be used to further measure internal effectiveness and then comparing it against the norms and criterion expected by external participants.

The typological assumption of Oliver's study (1991), which believes that organisations are not necessarily submissive audiences of institutional prescriptions, builds a number of extended models of organisational response approaches to institutional demands. Oliver's model is absent in

forecasting ability when it comes to responding to conflicting demands, which are bound to cause institutional complexity for organisations (Greenwood et al., 2011; Pache & Santos, 2010a). As a result, a few of these extended models draw a particular attention on organisational enactment of competing demands. The predominant model attempting to identify organisational strategic responses to pluralistic and conflicting demands is developed by Kraatz and Block (2008). They proposed four different approaches organisations may adopt when exposed by pluralistic environment. The core of this model is the essential role of identity, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs.

The first approach is elimination. Organisations may attempt to eliminate one or more inconsistently multiple institutional identities they perceive it has a negative impact on their legitimacy and/or privileges (Pratt & Foreman, 2000).

The second method of organisational responses to pluralism is compartmentalisation. This strategy is similar to “buffering” tactics in Oliver’s (1991) model. When enforced by pluralistic demands, organisations may present symbolic compliance to constituencies with no substantial intention to adopt the institutional prescriptions into their practices. In other words, organisations that adopt this strategy separate their core structure from their everyday activities (Pache & Santos, 2013b). Compartmentalisation or decoupling is usually selected in the circumstances where external logics contrast sharply with domestically institutionalised goals of organisations (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). There are arguments amongst institutional scholars whether or not this strategy is an effective response in a long run. There are those who insist that the strategy can reduce a tension between external and internal prescriptions. Also minimise chances to get scrutinised by institutional coalitions. Therefore, organisational legitimacy and resource supports are under protection (Binder, 2007; Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Oliver, 1991). However, a cautious implication of compartmentalisation or decoupling when applied to pluralistic organisations is ignorance values and importance of institutional identity(s), which are not symbolically displayed by the organisations.

Particularly, it becomes more challenging in environments where enduringly competing logics exist. In such context, it is likely that there will be an increase in sheer number of institutional coalitions. Thus, it would be more difficult for organisations to escape close scrutiny of them (Pache & Santos, 2010b). This might potentially jeopardise organisational legitimacy (Boxenbaum & Jonsson, 2008). Moreover, over long periods of time in such context, organisations may not be able to buffer pressures of institutions and that ceremonially compliant structure may take place in the organisations, which eventually have some effects on organisational identities alignments (Edelman, 1992). Even though symbolism promotes autonomy to some extent and entitles organisations to respond to multiple demands, the embodiment of organisational commitment to the displayed symbols is crucial to maintain the status quo (Kraatz & Block, 2008; Westphal & Zajac, 2001).

Thirdly, organisations may aim at controlling the tensions of pluralism by endeavouring to balance a variety of institutionalised identities. The organisations usually promote cooperation and seek to establish decent balance between those identities. This type of responses was mentioned earlier in Oliver's (1991) model under the compromise strategy, which was likely to happen when external expectations conflict with organisational interests. Pache and Santos (2013b) also comment in their study that the balance or compromise strategy has its implications on hybrid organisations as the strategy focuses on negotiating with, adjusting and forging link the demands of disparate institutional coalitions. As a result, organisations at least meet the minimum requirements of external expectations, which meant that their legitimacy, social endorsement and supports are secure. However, the scholars note the limitations of this kind of response that sometimes it might not always be a strategy to rely on as logics create and promote competing goals or when the organisation finds itself incompatible or unable to modify given logics. Therefore, even though numerous studies attempt to determine organisational responses on competing logics, the concepts such as compromising and decoupling are left questioned whether they are viable strategies.



Lastly, organisations may comply with pluralism through building their own durable identities and being autonomous to insulate organisational members from pluralistic and competing demands. This process emerges organisations' own purposes and goals, which they can value in their own right rather than blindly accept external ends. In effect, this kind of organisational response shows the dynamic of institutionalisation, which also can be seen as bottom-up process (Zucker, 1977).

Beside the two models of organisational responses discussed above, there is a more contemporary stream of work concerning combination of disparate logics – hybridisation strategies (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; D'Aunno et al., 1991; Lounsbury, 2007; Pache & Santos, 2013a, 2013b). Amongst institutional theorists, it becomes widely accepted that in today's world, organisations are challenged by fragmented environments and uncoordinated demands from disparate institutional referents. Gaining legitimacy and social acceptance from institutional referents are considered to be more effective than excellent performance in rational perspective. In the given circumstances, the appropriate structure and practices of these organisations are hard to justify, especially when such external demands conflict with the internal activities (D'Aunno et al., 1991). The concept of hybrids then becomes prevalent in responding to institutional complexity as it involves with forging link intact practices of each logic and eventually evolving into a new organisational identity (Binder, 2007; Lounsbury, 2007). According to Battilana and Dorado (2010), hybrid organisation refers to an organisation that “*combines institutional logics in unprecedented ways*” (p.1419). Despite being partial compliance, at least, hybrid organisations are believed to able to protect legitimacy from a variety of field level actors and effectively accomplish organisational outcomes (Greenwood et al., 2011; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Pache & Santos, 2013b). Yet there is not enough evidence of its long-term implications (Greenwood et al., 2011).

Referring to the definition of hybrid organisations, it clearly shows the core function of hybrids is to incorporate multiple demands and embody them in unprecedented ways. As it is forging bridge between logics that are

often incompatible, the chance of hybrid organisations to face a number of challenges is heightened. These logics may not be blended and work simply. Moreover, pioneering hybrid organisations do not have any role model for guiding how to deal with tensions and conflicts derived from combining different logics (Battilana & Dorado, 2010). Particularly, in the situation where institutional complexity is enduring. Over time, it is likely that one logic may be dominant over others and if powerful institutional constituencies left neglected, legitimacy of hybrid organisations may be under jeopardy (D'Aunno et al., 1991). It is also likely to create confrontation in intra-organisation because organisational members may hold different beliefs and favour different logics, which may interfere a well balance between logics (Glynn, 2000; Heimer, 1999). The suggestions of Meyer and Scott (1991) are also consistent with these studies. They state that hybrid organisations are vulnerable in their nature and probably unable to maintain the hybrid forms in the long runs. An evidence is displayed by the research of Tracey, Phillips, and Jarvis (2011), who study a hybrid company bridging commercial and charity logics to defeat homelessness. Even though the company was success in adopting hybrid forms, a while after, it collapsed as it could not continue to satisfy the demands of the external establishments. Another evidence is the work of Battilana and Dorado (2010), which studies two different hybrid banks with an attempt to explore how they develop and retain their hybrids. These organisations yielded contrasting outcomes due to dissimilar human resource practices. One only recruited those who did not have previous experience in neither development nor banking logics. This bank successfully established a hybrid identity initiated through blending the two logics together. On the other hand, the other bank emphasised only on those who had backgrounds relating to development logic and ultimately, it failed to sustain its hybrids due to the conflict of interest amongst its subunits. The study reflects the difficulties in hybridising an organisation in which its members' behaviour are affected by embeddedness of institutional prescriptions (Greenwood et al., 2011).

These studies do not only supply some insights in terms of the potential challenges hybrid organisations may experience but also how to

sustain their hybrids when facing durable institutional pluralism. They strike the importance of internal trials and oppositions of accepting opposing logics. A strongly shared organisational identity is necessary for sustaining hybrids as it prevents the emergence of sub-identities, which may create internal conflicts resulting in difficulties in logic combinations (Battilana & Dorado, 2010). Pache and Santos (2013b) argue that organisations continually struggle with a challenge of internal conflict. Such conflicts can harm and escalate into major issues. However, the conflicts can be lessened, if internal conflict on goals can be avoided and conflicts on means are manageable through utilising a variety of appropriate strategies. Most importantly, even if hybrid organisations are able to avoid internal conflict, facing external participants who often exert competing demands is inevitable. Thus, in order to keep their supports, the organisations have to at least, partially conform to their demands. Rather than adopting decoupling strategy where organisations are not committed to bring the demands into implementation, selective coupling is more suitable as it is a strategy in which the organisations deliberately select intact practices of each logic and blend it together (Pache & Santos, 2013b).

In short, Institutional complexity is becoming a permanent future. It is appropriate for organisations to learn how to address, avoid or minimise the impact of competing and pluralistic demands. A realistic framework should be constituted along with thorough consideration of operational side of hybrid organisations in order to indicate advantages in the institutional pluralism ambience.

### **3.2.3 Organisational Effectiveness (OE)**

#### *3.2.3.1 Conceptualisation*

Organisational effectiveness has been an essential area of study in the management field, used to improve and develop organisational practices. Several research models have been used to measure organisational effectiveness, the main purpose being to improve functioning of an organisation by studying the factors, which contribute towards effectiveness. Despite the importance of organisational effectiveness,

several researchers have pointed out the confusion that persists regarding the exact meaning of organisational effectiveness. As various studies have used different criteria for measuring organisational effectiveness, it is not possible to compare those studies (Steers, 1975) and it has been argued that organisational effectiveness, because of the ambiguity surrounding the concept has become a label frequently attached to a variety of organisational phenomenon instead of having a specific and direct meaning (Cameron, 1978).

Despite the ambiguity concerning the concept, organisational effectiveness can be considered as a phenomenon applicable to different sized groups operating in a competitive environment, with goals to do better than the competing members (Dressler, 2004). Organisational effectiveness, as a subject for this study has different variables upon which it is dependent. Therefore, it is important to identify organisational effectiveness as a dependent variable considered separately from other factors which influence effectiveness and thus are to be considered as independent variables (Anderson, 2006). There are different ways to summarise organisational effectiveness, but most definitions consider organisational goals or objectives as significant to organisational effectiveness. Thus, effectiveness as such denotes the achievement of organisational objectives in relation to the external environment and may be manifested in attainment of competitive advantage (Barney, 1991).

#### *3.2.3.2 Effectiveness in education sector*

In the case of higher education organisations, there is a higher degree of scepticism about the kind of commercial objectives being relevant for an educational organisation and defensiveness, particularly amongst the academic community, for whom an educational organisation is an academic domain without the kind of concerns typically found in commercial organisations. There are varying factors that need to be considered, as there has been further ambiguity in the concept of effectiveness specifically in relation to colleges and universities. Such ambiguity, which presents itself specifically in the case of colleges and universities, is a characteristic of what constitutes effective performance in such organisations. As per the

nature of these specific organisations, there is an absence of measurable goals, little direct connection between acquired resources and products (Cameron, 1986). Moreover, there is a tradition in these organisations to resist assessment of effectiveness that sabotages the emergence of consensual criteria of effectiveness. Higher education organisations have fervently stated their difference from typical organisations, and thus arguing that traditional approaches to assessment are inapplicable to these specific organisations (March & Olsen, 1976). It is essential for the organisational effectiveness of colleges and universities that they be judged regularly by the constituencies with a stake in their functioning, such as accreditation agencies, which act as enforcers of government standards, also faculty members, parents, funders, and employers. However, there are no particular criterion of effectiveness in place thus far, and the meaning of organisational effectiveness, which is ambiguous in itself, becomes complicated further in the case of higher education (Hutchins, 1977).

Various commentators, (for example Cameron 1978), have pointed out that effort to evaluate organisational effectiveness in higher education are often seen as attempts to scrutinize and control higher education, or merely as a focus on defects that need to be corrected, rather than an effort to measure and improve organisational effectiveness as a whole. The implication of such pressures upon evaluation seems to be that measuring organisational effectiveness is deemed to be an effort to restrict academic freedom to experiment and innovate, or to establish a unique quality standard; thereby evaluation is looked upon from a negative viewpoint as something that ought to be resisted rather than embraced. Also, the financial pressures on higher education organisations have meant that these organisations have been forced to focus on efficiency, rather than on effectiveness and as a result most of the research in organisation effectiveness is focused on efficiency. As Meeth (1974) points out the central concern of higher education organisations in the 1970's was to provide quality education for minimal amount of expenses by focusing on efficiency, as a means of financial regulation.

### *3.2.3.3 Assessing organisational effectiveness*

Different approaches have been used to define organisational effectiveness, and establish the best criteria for measuring organisational effectiveness. Cameron & Whetten (1983) argue that various approaches to measure organisational effectiveness are products of different arbitrary models developed for different organisations. The reason being, that a definite construct space of effectiveness has never been bounded and that effectiveness remains a product of individual values and preferences. Thus, for these reasons, one single criterion, which could be considered as the best for assessing effectiveness, has not yet been identified. Also, all the factors which can be considered as relevant to organisational effectiveness have not been identified, as these keep changing from one organisation to another, depending on different cultural, social, and economic factors. The different approaches that have been employed from different conceptualisations of organisational effectiveness will be taken into consideration when developing an approach for this particular study. Amongst the different approaches, each approach has distinct advantages as a research and theoretical tool, but at the same time each of them has certain weakness as well (Cameron, 1981). As each of the models to be considered are analytically independent, a certain approach might be appropriate for particular circumstance, while for certain types of organisations, some approaches might not be valid depending on the different variables which are taken into consideration in a particular approach. A major consideration while choosing a model most appropriate in assessing effectiveness is the domain of activity in which an organisation operates. As an example, the strategic constituencies approach might be best applicable to assessing effectiveness for an organisation operating in multiple domains, where outcomes might be obscure, or where the organisation is required to respond to a diverse group of constituencies' demands. Whereas, the goal model is inappropriate in cases where the organisational domain is narrowly defined with goals being consensual and outcomes being easily identifiable.

In relation to the statement discussed above, organisational

domains refer to the population served, the technology employed, and the services rendered by an organisation (Meyer, 1975). These domains arise as per choices made by dominant members concerning activities that ought to be emphasized, and the evaluation criteria that are agreed upon amongst the dominant members. Organisations frequently operate in multiple domains, but only very few organisations are able to maximize organisational effectiveness in their entire domain. In the case of higher education organisations, which are under consideration for this particular study, these domains stretch from students, to the educational services being provided and the technology, which is employed in delivering those services.

One of the most widely used models for measuring organisational effectiveness is the goal model (which includes operative and official goals), defining effectiveness as the extent to which an organisation accomplishes its set goals and objectives (Scott, 1977). For the higher education organisations being considered in this study, these goals could include the educational qualifications being provided as per certain standards, or the financial goals, which need to be accomplished to achieve the academic standards. However, there are certain weaknesses of the goal model. Such as, the model, which focuses on set goals, might mean the organisation is focused on a narrow domain, or an organisation could be judged effective in areas outside its goal domain. Also, an organisation might be ineffective in its overall growth if the goals to accomplish are set too low, are misplaced, or turn out to be harmful in the long run, due to unforeseeable circumstances (Cameron, 1981).

Another approach, which can be used to measure organisational effectiveness, is the System Resource Model, which focuses on the ability of an organisation to obtain the necessary resources. In the case of this approach the focus is on the resources being put into an organisation rather than on the results. Therefore, essentially input replaces output as the primary consideration (Yuchtman & Seashore, 1967). But this is not a fool proof approach, as it could well happen that organisations might prove to be effective even when the inputs are not optimal. Furthermore, (Molnar &

Rogers, 1976) suggest that in non-profit organisations, which are close equivalents of certain higher education organisations such as public universities, the acquisition of inputs is not tied to the production of outputs. Consequently, resource acquisition (inputs) cannot be solely used as a legitimate criterion to measure organisational effectiveness. Thus, the effective organisation of resources does not guarantee the effective usage of the resources in an organisation.

A third approach which is used to measure organisational effectiveness is the Process Model, wherein effectiveness is equated with internal organisational health, efficiency, or well-oiled internal processes and procedure. (Likert, 1967) represents the set of researchers that are in agreement with this approach towards measuring organisational effectiveness. Therefore, the focus in this model is on processes and procedures rather than on external environment and setting of goals. However, there is no guarantee that an organisation can only be deemed as effective when organisational health is perfect and internal process run smoothly. Moreover, in turbulent external environments, the presence of organisational slack (unused, convertible resources) might indicate inefficiency in internal process while being essential for the long-term health of an organisation.

The final approach in consideration is what is known as the Ecological Model (Miles, 1980), or the Participant Satisfaction Model (Keeley, 1978). In this particular approach, organisational effectiveness is defined in terms of the degree to which needs and expectations of participating strategic constituencies are met by the organisation under consideration. Another way of stating the criterion is suggested by Keeley, as the minimization of regret. There are different ways in which this approach can be viewed, either as a summary measure for an organisation, i.e. the minimal satisfaction level for all comprising constituencies, or as a series of different scores from a variety of constituencies, i.e. the point at which score variance becomes critical. The participant satisfaction model places emphasis on constituencies outside the organisation as well, and the organisation, which is considered the most effective, is the one that at least



minimally satisfies, or reduces the regret of these major strategic constituencies, as emphasized by Keeley.

#### *3.2.3.4 Assessing effectiveness in education sector*

In the case of higher education organisations, due to the problem of ambiguity and diffuseness of goals, both objective and perceptual criteria need to be obtained from institutions of higher education, and anonymity be granted to both institutions and individuals in an attempt to reduce defensiveness and reporting bias. The criteria for measuring organisational effectiveness, needs to be suited to higher education institutions rather than be common to the universal criteria as applicable to generic organisations in the field of management. The generality of criteria often resulting as a consequence of a universalistic approach as contrary to the uniqueness of organisational features of higher education institutions made this choice reasonable, as there are no explicit precedents for the kind of effectiveness criteria in higher education, especially, effectiveness criteria that autonomous university might need within the Thai university system (Cameron, 1978).

In sum, the researcher has decided to develop a theoretical framework by using autonomy, institutional theory and organisational effectiveness because this research focuses on;

1. the dynamics of how the three universities are taking shape,
2. what is influencing the way in which these universities pursue the kind of goals in terms of what is broadly implied rather than the explicit goals that have been established for them, and
3. how is the process of transformation, institutional change impacting on the achievement of those outcomes?

The Thai government introduced the new regime of university autonomy because they, initially, wanted to improve the administration system of the Thai higher education. Then, these expectations were expanded to being more competitive internationally. These goals are harmonious in policy. However, autonomy allows variation in

implementation. Therefore, to understand the fundamental concept of university autonomy, which is the core theme of the study, autonomy theory needs to be reviewed. Although, the focus of this research is not about the actual mechanics and processes of measuring the effectiveness of the universities, organisational effectiveness is still important in the thesis. This is because the whole reason for the institutional transition is in order to achieve certain outcomes and in trying to understand what the universities are doing in terms of implicit expectations. The government has set the four main missions for the universities to accomplish. More autonomy promotes more flexibility in the internal management of the universities, which is believed to help in fulfilling the four main missions. Therefore, it seems that the effectiveness of autonomous universities is measured by looking at how well the universities achieve these missions. Kim Cameron's work is some of the most important ground work around organisational effectiveness and it still remains a major and widely referred to theory. Particularly, the "goal model" which imposes some kind of structure around what the government seems to be doing. This will be analysed and unpacked in the analysis later on.

Consistent with the research focus, institutional theory is entirely relevant to the analysis the study in terms of trying to understand the dynamics of institutional transition. The institutional perspective can help to explain the phenomenon of the reform of the universities that has been occurring, the impact of that in different scenarios and what has been the force of such changes. Although the path dependent construct offers a similar perspective to the broader institutional theory and one that could be seen as an alternative perspective, institutional theory provides a wider breadth in explaining the dynamics of the phenomenon. Moreover, the empirical evidence of path dependency is still sceptical across various disciplines (Vergne, 2010). Thus, to serve the research purpose at its best, the researcher has chosen to use the institutional framework to unpack the analysis.

## Chapter 4

### Research Methodology

This chapter describes the research methodology employed in this study under the sub-sections: (1) Introduction (2) Case Study, (3) Case Selection, (4) Sources of Evidence, (5) Data Collection Procedures, (6) Ensuring Validity and Reliability (7) Data Analysis, (8) Limitation, and (9) Conclusion

#### 4.1 Introduction

The two major methods of research are qualitative and quantitative. Researchers can choose which method to utilise based on their personal preference and the objective of their study (Algozzine & Hancock, 2006). Quantitative research focuses on asking as many people as possible (often through surveys or multiple choice questionnaires) the same questions and turning the information gained into statistics and graphs to later analyse and find trends. Qualitative research produces non-numerical data through interviews to understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviour, and interactions (Pathak, Jena, & Kalra, 2013). Qualitative research utilises less interviewees but asks more in depth questions, often there is a personal element involved because the respondent is replying to interview questions, not just filling in a survey. This is in line with (Merriam, 1998)'s statement that *"qualitative researchers are interested in understanding the meaning people have constructed, that is, how they make sense of their world and the experiences they have in the world"* (Merriam, 1998, p. 6). Thus, if the reflection of participants' life is accentuated, the qualitative research method is more appropriate (Flick, 2009).

Rather than statistically compared findings, this research explicitly focuses on uncovering the experiences of the Thai universities undergoing change from a more regulatory towards a more autonomous model. Additionally, the research also seeks to explain how such change impacts the universities' effectiveness. To understand these phenomena, which are more sophisticated and complex, due to the unique characteristics of the

universities, the researcher believes qualitative research method can access richer information, which contributes to a deeper understanding, especially regarding social phenomena. It also helps the researcher to focus on internal aspects to appreciate complex issues such as the university structures and context. Therefore, this study adopts a qualitative methodology by using a case study strategy.

#### **4.2 Case study**

The rationale for the case studies design was that the study conducted dealt with the complex phenomena of the Thai higher education reform particularly, in terms of the national policy encouraging Thai universities to develop an autonomous form of operation. Also, there is ambiguity in some of the themes considered such as; autonomy and organisational effectiveness. Consequently, the method used enabled an in-depth exploration obtaining information or data of the phenomenon under the study. This is in line with Yin (2009) and Creswell, Hanson, Plano, and Morales (2007) who state that a case study is a method to investigate an in-depth phenomenon (e.g., an activity, event, process, individuals or organisations) within a real-life context based on comprehensive data collection.

Yin (2003) characterised four types for case study designs generated from a 2 x 2 matrix. The four types of designs are single-case holistic designs, single-case embedded designed, multiple-case holistic designs, and multiple-case embedded designs. The holistic approach is utilised when the aim of the study is to examine only the overall nature of the unit studied or when there are no reasonable subunits that can be determined. In contrast, the embedded approach is suitable when there is more than one unit of analysis in the same case study. Researchers might select these embedded units by employing sampling or cluster techniques.

However, both holistic and embedded approaches have their disadvantages. Some problems do occur in holistic design when a global approach allows an investigator to evade going through phenomenon in detail. From here the typical setback with holistic design is that the case

study may be carried out at an excessive level, lacking clear data and measurements. Also with a holistic design the whole nature of the case study may shift over time without the researcher's knowledge. The first questions of the study may head in one direction yet as the study continues other directions may emerge resulting in different questions being addressed. This can disrupt the process especially if the initial questions are relevant to the overall study. The embedded approach also has its potential disadvantages. As it uses subunits some case studies may only focus on the subunit level and not the larger unit of analysis (Yin, 2003, 2009).

When designing case studies there are two main approaches, single case and multiple case designs. The single case approach is appropriate depending on the type of case. This is appropriate for the critical case in testing a theory. The single case can be used to find out whether a theory's intentions are correct or if some other explanations might be more applicable. This can also be used on a typical case. This is when the objective is to capture the conditions of an everyday situation. Also, this is used in revelatory cases, where researchers observe and analyse a phenomenon previously unattainable to social science enquiry. Single case designs are justifiable for use under these certain case conditions. For most studies, multiple cases may be preferred over single case. This is because researchers are using more than one case, which increases their chances of more questions of the quality of the data drawn from multiple sources. Also, the analytical benefits from having more than one case may be considerable. This is where multiple case designs have the advantage as they provide an opportunity for findings to be replicated and for contrasting between cases. This provides a better understanding of phenomena under study. Stake (1995) points out similar advantages of multiple cases stating that researchers should preserve the *"multiple realities, the different and even contradictory views of what is happening"* (p. 12).

Furthermore, Merriam (1998) suggests some limitations of using a case study method such as; length of time and involvement of researchers in a data analysis process. Guba (1981) also notes that expressing opinions

into the data analysis process of researchers can lead to misinterpretations resulting in incorrect conclusions. Consequently, researchers should be aware of how to control their biases and involvement in order to find the best possible conclusions (Bromley, 1986).

Taking into account the advantages and disadvantages of case study approaches together with the primary purpose of this study, a multiple case holistic design approach was chosen. It was the researcher's intention to explore and analyse the impact of autonomy on the effectiveness of the three different Thai universities individually in a larger area rather than specific aspects of each university. Moreover, using more than one university allows the researcher to gain some insights from comparing the differences of individual details and experiences in regard to the change process and effects of such changes. Therefore, the holistic design is more suitable than the embedded design and a multiple case approach is more helpful than a single case approach.

#### **4.3 Case selection**

For this study, the purposive sampling technique was utilised to select the three particular different Thai autonomous universities from different backgrounds. The purposive sampling is *"based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insights; therefore, one needs to select a sample from which one can learn the most"* (Merriam, 1998, p. 48). The researcher wanted to discover the possible effects of being autonomous on the university capabilities and effectiveness through the three case studies. Each case has different backgrounds due to the fact that autonomous universities in Thailand can be categorised into three different groups based on their pace of becoming an autonomous university. The researcher believed that each of the three universities could represent an instance of each category. These included three universities that have either 1) been initially established as autonomous, 2) willingly become more autonomous by performing status change from a public university, and 3) have become an autonomous university as a result of either direct or indirect pressures from the Government.

In general, each of the three universities has developed a different management structure in order to become effectively autonomous depending on top administrators' decision. However, the difference in their origins gave rise to different tensions that they experienced in terms of internal operations as they have become autonomous universities. Thus, varying results were obtained from different sections of the research, which led the researcher to develop critical findings.

The first university (KUT) selected is located in North East Thailand. It was established in 1990 soon after the Government promulgated the First 15-Year Long Range Plan (1990 – 2004) stipulating that any new public universities to be established must be autonomous universities from the beginning. The remaining public universities were also encouraged to incorporate by 2000. As a consequence of the long-range plan, this university was the first established autonomous university in Thailand. Moreover, the university was also a representative of the Government's determination in terms of promoting the model of autonomous university in Thailand. Thus, it was nominated as a role model of Thai autonomous university for the other universities to pursue the pace.

The second university (ETUT) selected, was located in Bangkok – the central city of Thailand. It was established in 1960 as a college focusing on producing skilled graduates especially in the field of sciences. The university has operated under the bureaucratic system for over forty years before moving towards an autonomous model in 1998. The uniqueness of this university that attracted the researcher's attention was the proactive decision of its senior executives regarding the move to become more autonomous without waiting to be pressurised to do so. Therefore, this university was the first public university that willingly transformed its status to become an autonomous university. This transformation resulted in the university being able to operate autonomously to some extent without the constraints of a bureaucratic system. After the change, the other public universities closely observed this university as they were intimidated by the autonomous model and wanted to see if it was effective.

The third university was the first Buddhist University in Thailand (NBU) initiated in 1893 by the Royal Majesty King Rama V. His intention was to set up an academy for monks and novices to study and abide by Buddhist doctrines. Subsequently, in 1946, due to a large number of monks and novices coming to study in the college, His Holiness Somdet Phra Sankkharaj together with the Buddhist chapter promoted the college to become a tertiary institution. The university had been long operated under the supervision of the Buddhist chapter and the Department of Religious Affairs (DRA) – Ministry of Culture. However, due to a number of difficulties such as insufficient funds and other resources, the university strove to be integrated into the higher education system. The university proposal was approved in 1997, which was after the promulgation of the First 15-Year Long Range Plan. Consequently, NBU in becoming a university had to adopt the autonomous model.

#### **4.4 Sources of evidence**

Although, this study was carried out using a multiple case holistic design, it integrated both qualitative and quantitative evidence. Doing so helped the researcher to gain an in-depth study of the details of each case, which was very helpful to the data analysis process. Thus, in this study, the researcher largely made use of three different sources of evidence. The details are presented as follows:

##### *1. In-depth Interviews*

To gain insights into the situations during the change period interviewing the senior administrators, middle managers, and staff was the main source of data. This includes the data obtained from a series of in-depth semi-structured person-to-person interviews with the dominant coalition(s) within each university under the study. The data from the interviews contributes to the construction of the case studies and provided insights, which may not be available from documentary information (Yin, 2011). Interviewing as a data collection method has a lot of advantages, for example researchers can prompt the interviewee for more in depth information if their answers were ambiguous or unclear. Furthermore,



interviews can contain more open ended questions whereas a survey is mostly limited to more shallow yes or no questions. According to Seidman (2013), interviews are the primary way a person should seek to understand how individuals experience life within an organisation or society. Seidman also states that one has to consider many factors before choosing to interview as a main source of information, such as the interviewer needs to develop an equal amount of rapport with each interviewee so that the interviewees don't feel shy and are more open to share their experiences. The quality of the information obtained in the interview can be affected by the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee. On the one hand, if the interviewer does not know the interviewee at all the respondent might not be willing to completely open up to the interviewer because they might not feel comfortable sharing their personal thought with an unknown person. Otherwise, if the interviewer and interviewee are close, the interview might be conducted more informally with inappropriate rapport which could lead to a misinterpretation of data (Seidman, 2013).

This research utilised an informal conversational interview method (sometimes known as unstructured or semi-structured interviewing) which allowed the interviewee to answer openly to the indicative questions. This could then be followed up with more in depth questions seeking to clarify some specific points. The informal conversational interview method or semi-structured interview helped the researcher in prepared questioning and guiding the theme of the interviews to be covered during the session. There was an interview guide prepared before-hand which was followed for each interview, but there were further follow up questions that were not prepared earlier. In this research, all the interview sessions were conducted face to face with one individual. The interviews used open-ended and non-directive questions to encourage the participants to express their thoughts regarding the change to autonomy and the effects of such a change within the universities.

## *2. Documentation*

This included published articles, academic journals, books, and articles posted on the World Wide Web and placed in libraries but not limited

to other internal administrative reports and documents. These documents did not only provide the other form of information in the data collection process but they also contributed to the theoretical framework development.

### *3. Archival Records*

Archival records in many case study researches, can be used together with other types of information (Yin, 2013). The archival records in this study included internal organisational records, charts, and survey data of each university under the study.

## **4.5 Data collection procedures**

Data collection is an important stage of doing research to understand what is happening in the context of study. Case study data collection is related to a protocol and activities that needs a good preparation in order to conduct high quality research similar to data collection of other research methods. Failure to do so may threaten successful fieldwork and cause slowness in doing research, especially, when researchers have limited resources such as time and money (Stake, 1994; Stake, 1995; Yin, 2011, 2013). In this research, the in-depth interview was the suitable alternative instrument to collect deep information from involved people from administrative and operational levels during change process.

There were six stages in developing and using the in-depth interview for this study.

### *1. Select the participants*

The researcher conducted in-depth interviews using open-ended questions with the dominant coalitions of each university. The dominant coalitions refer to the people who represent a specific group within the university who have major influence over the functionality of the universities. In these cases, the dominant coalitions were the top administrators from each university. Normally, the Vice Presidents will oversee six main areas including academic affairs, administrative affairs, property and finance, planning, information technology, and research; however, each university

might have the name of these areas differently. The researcher chose to use the dominant coalition as Thompson (1967) suggests that dominant coalition is the most likely group to make specific both the cause and affect relationships within an organisation and the hierarchy of outcomes to be preferred. Moreover, organisation's dominant coalition should be the sources of criteria for organisational effectiveness and their measurement, since they comprised the resource allocators, the determiners of organisational policy, and the explicators of organisational goals. Members of the dominant coalition are therefore the main participants involved in organisational effectiveness as well as being a knowledgeable source about the organisational features. The researcher then selected the representatives from the executive - management levels of four main areas from each university including Planning and Policies, Human Resources, Administration Affairs, and Academic Affairs. To ensure that these groups were available, the researcher made some long-distance calls to make appointments.

## *2. Develop the interview guide*

The researcher developed a list of questions as an interview guide to advise memory during the interview. The interview guide consisted of three structures: 1) introducing the research topic and the researcher; 2) background information from four main issues - Planning and Policies, Human Resources, Administration Affairs, and Academic Affairs; and 3) relevant questions based on those four issues. Questions were predetermined but there was sufficient opportunity to allow the interviewees to clarify and shape the flow of information.

The questions in the interview were not fixed, but included main themes relevant to the transition process affecting university effectiveness. The themes were divided into three sections including:

Section A: to ask participants about the changes due to the transition towards autonomous model.

Section B: to ask participants about the effect of changes on university capabilities.

Section C: to ask participants about how the effects have changed the organisational effectiveness of the universities.

### *3. Seeking permission to conduct research*

A formal letter was sent to introduce the researcher and research purpose to the selected interviewees. This letter was sent to all selected interviewees after long-distance calls to make appointments in order to understand the research purpose and possible key questions. Also, a consent form was attached to ask permission from all selected interviewees to participate in the interviews.

### *4. Pilot test of the questions*

The interview guide was first tested on ETUT in order to improve the effectiveness of interview questions. There was a total of four interviewees from management and executive level to be interviewed: 1) Vice – President for Administration Affairs; 2) Director for Planning Division; 3) Director for Academic Service Division; 4) Director for Human Resource Management Office. The reason the researcher chose to do pilot test with ETUT was that the researcher used to work at ETUT. Thus, the researcher gained access more easily than the other two universities.

### *5. Review interview questions*

After the first interview with ETUT, the list of questions was carefully reviewed in order to improve its effectiveness. Each university has different background, thus questions needed to be adapted to reach more relevant answers and information from the other two universities.

### *6. Conduct the interviews*

The fieldtrip to the other two universities – NBU and KUT took approximately one month each institute. Each interviewee was asked to share knowledge and experiences and an insight of their particular specialty. The interview sessions were conducted in the Thai language. Later, the researcher transcribed the interview scripts into English. Each

session took approximately an hour. During the interviews, the researcher took notes as well as recorded the interviews on a digital voice recorder.

#### **4.6 Ensuring reliability and validity**

As Merriam (1998) states, internal validity is a measure of how well research findings capture reality; for a study to have internal validity, researchers must accurately portray participants' "constructions of reality" (p. 203). For this research, I considered reliability and validity in the design of the study and during the data analysis process. Triangulation, member checks, long term observations and the researcher being aware of their own biases are some of the methods that can be used to enhance the internal validity of a study (Merriam, 1998). Those methods were used in this study, with the first part being triangulating the data through a number of sources. These sources included interviews, documents and surveys, whilst finding examples to back up themes which appeared during analysis of the data. The researcher also asked participants to review their transcripts in order for accurate translation results.

#### **4.7 Data analysis**

First, the interviews were transcribed. The researcher utilised open coding technique to manage the data. Due to the language barrier, the researcher did not use direct quote from the interviews but rather translated them into English.

As the researcher chose a multiple case study there were two stages of analysis including single case and cross case analysis. For the single case analysis, each case was individually analysed using the constant comparison approach, which according to Strauss and Corbin (1998) consists of looking for patterns within and across data in order to define emerging constructs, phenomena and relationships.

Within each case the interview transcript was sent back to each interviewee and then was coded. This allowed the interviewees to scrutinise the conversations and confirm whether those conversations were exactly what they wanted to say. The researcher took advantage of this technique to avoid bias that might have occurred in the interpretation process. Coding

refers to the method of not only reducing the data to a manageable and organised form, but also the process of “data complication” or using coding “to expand and tease out the data, in order to formulate new questions and levels of interpretation”, which can sometimes be ignored in the coding procedure (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 30).

For each case that was involved the researcher started with a list of set codes centred on the research purposes. If codes were to appear from the data during analysis, this would benefit the researcher’s study as it allowed unbiased interpretation. Once the data was coded they were sorted into categories. Following that the researcher then observed the chunks of data, trying to find patterns and themes, as well as inconsistencies within the case and prepare a report of each case.

Once the single case analysis was completed, the researcher then moved onto the cross-case analysis in order to compare and contrast the characteristics and themes of the various cases. This approach helped the researcher to expand knowledge about the individualism of each case. Therefore, the researcher achieved some critical insights.

#### **4.8 Limitations**

One limitation was generalisation. As Yin (2009) points out the generalised results have plagued qualitative researchers for some time because the results of qualitative research cannot be generalised in the same way that may be possible with a quantitative study.

Another limitation was that if the case studies take too long, they resulted in illegible and extensive documents so when researching the researcher needed to incorporate appropriate data management.

Due to this institution being quite orthodox and old fashioned the amount of digital data available was comparatively low. In 2007 Thailand had the biggest flood in its history and this caused the NBU University to lose a lot of its information which was collected in physical form rather than digitally on a computer. This meant a lot of historical data is unavailable and

the records were not completely reliable because they implemented an old-fashioned data collection method.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

In summary, this chapter has provided a description of the research methodology used in this research. A qualitative research methodology was employed to express the effect of regulatory change on the three universities' capabilities and illustrate how the effects have changed the organisational effectiveness of the universities. The techniques of single case and cross case analysis were applied in the process of data analysis in order to compare the change process affecting each university's effectiveness. Finally, some limitations were set for further research. The next three chapters provides an overview of three universities' background, change process, and effects of change process towards effectiveness.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Kingston University of Technology (KUT)**

This chapter will present the first case study, KUT, under six main headings:

1. History,
2. Becoming an autonomous university,
3. The university administration,
4. The university performance,
5. Summary of the background, and
6. Lesson to be learnt from KUT

The name of the university has been protected by using a pseudonym of “Kingston University of Technology (KUT)”.

#### **5.1 History**

During the period of the Fifth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1982-1986), the Royal Thai Government promoted the creation of higher education opportunities in regional and rural areas. Of the sixteen public universities in Thailand, twelve universities were located in Bangkok with only four public universities located in regional areas, not enough to increase the number of people who had access to higher education (Nakornthap, 2005). In 1984, the Ministry of University Affairs (now, the Office of the Commission on Higher Education, a part of Ministry of Education) proposed the establishment of five new regional universities (Suranaree University of Technology, 2013c). Although, first proposed by the Ministry of University Affairs in 1984 and again in 1987, it was not until a new Government took office in 1988 that the proposal was actioned with the additional requirement of a focus on regional universities (Nakornthap, 2005).



In the Northeast, "Kingston College" was located on 1,120 hectares of degraded forest land in the Huay Yang Reservoir, Muang District, Nakhon Ratchasima. The Kingston University Establishment Committee with the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of University Affairs (Prof. Dr. Wichit Srisa-an) as the Chair, tried to push the idea of it being a University of Technology and an Autonomous University which were regarded as important new attributes for Thai higher education institutions (Suranaree University of Technology, 2013c). To become a centre of excellence for technology, Kingston University needed more flexibility than was possible under a bureaucratic system in order to retain high quality lecturers and staff. The Cabinet finally approved this project on April 8, 1989, and KUT became the first University of Technology and the first Autonomous University under the supervision of the Royal Thai Government (Nakornthap, 2005).

During the period from July 1990 - to May 1993, the university was constructed and developed, and during this period of construction the university also developed its operational systems. KUT formally opened to admit students for the first time in May 1993. Seven hundred and thirty-one undergraduate students enrolled in nine program clusters of engineering and agricultural technology. Later, in 1997, adding three new undergraduate program clusters in Information Technology, and in 1999, two undergraduate program clusters in Health Science (Suranaree University of Technology, 2013c).

### **KUT Missions**

KUT has five main missions (Suranaree University of Technology, 2013d) as follow:

1. To train high-level scientific and technological personnel to meet national needs for development;
2. To engage in research for the creation and enhancement of knowledge, and to use the results for the development of the country;

3. To adapt, transfer, and develop suitable technology to increase Thailand's technological self-reliance;
4. To provide academic services to the public and to organisations in both governmental and private sectors; and
5. To provide national and regional cultural enrichment, especially in the arts and culture of the Northeast.

As an autonomous university, KUT has an organisation and administration system based on decentralisation and self-government. The decision-making power will be devolved by the University Council, which is the highest administration unit of KUT. KUT's organisation structure includes two important units:

1. *University Council*: This unit oversees general affairs especially policy, plans, budget, finance and property, establishing regulations for Personnel Administration, appointing top executives and approving academic degrees. The University Council comprises of:
  - President of the University Council,
  - Rector of KUT,
  - Chairman of the Federation of Thai Industries,
  - Chairman of Board of Trade of Thailand and
  - Nine – twelve external representatives (four of these must be from the north-eastern region), two representatives from the Academic Senate Committee and five representatives from the academic staff.
2. *Academic Senate*: This unit oversees academic affairs including teaching, research, academic service, and controlling the standard and quality of KUT academic affairs. Academic Senate comprises of:
  - President of the Academic Senate,

- Deans, Directors of centres, institutes, and professors, and
- Representatives from non-professorial academic staff (three per academic institute).

## 5.2 Becoming an autonomous university

KUT is distinct from the other two cases in this study, in that KUT has not been involved in a change process as KUT was established as an autonomous university. Important principles of a state autonomous university include high levels of independence, flexibility and efficiency as well as the ability of the institution to develop its own organisation and work system, to reduce steps in operations and to use existing resources to achieve the greatest benefit with economy. Most decisions are made at the university level, with external control limited as much as possible (Suranaree University of Technology, 2013a).

*Some people see an autonomous university from different perspectives. We see an autonomous university in terms of efficiency, but some people see it as a private university which is not correct. The Bureaucratic system is too slow and too big which is not suitable for the university as it makes the organisation adhere to sets of regulations too much. KUT's system is fast, but not too flexible, and we can set up regulations at the university level. For example, if there is any emergency that needs an urgent decision, the Rector can make a decision without submitting an agenda to a meeting. (The Assistant Rector of Academic Affairs in translation)*

Besides being the first University of Technology and the first autonomous university, KUT also has a prominent internal organisation structure which can respond to social needs. For example, KUT has a University Council based on a Lay Board which includes external representatives from society who participate in setting policy. KUT has a management style based on the principle, “Combined services and coordinated tasks” under a structure of Academic Institutes (teaching), Research Institutes (research), Centres (service) and the Office of the Rector (administration) which separates roles distinctly but shares

resources. Moreover, KUT established “Technopolis”, a central institute of the university, in order to provide academic services to society and to support research, development, adaptation, and transfer of technology, which is one of the five KUT Missions (Nakornthap, 2005). KUT has served as a model for public autonomous universities and as a mentor sharing expertise and experiences concerning a new type of operations and administrative systems with many organisations, especially those in the process of becoming a public autonomous university (Suranaree University of Technology, 2013a).

### **5.3 The university administration**

This section will describe aspects of four key components of the administration of an autonomous university: finance, academic affairs, personnel, and governance.

#### **5.3.1 Finance**

With increased autonomy and flexibility financial management becomes one of the central concerns for the administration of the university. KUT receives a budget from the Government in the form of a Block Grant and financial reporting and post auditing have been used to manage this budget. However, university expenditures must comply with the finance and assets regulations determined by the University Council, which has the final say on all financial and budgeting decisions. The Finance and Assets Board is appointed by the University Council as a sub-committee to supervise financial and budgetary matters (Suranaree University of Technology, 2013b). At least fifty percent of the membership of this committee must comprise external experts.

KUT adheres to the administrative philosophy of “Centralised Services, Coordinated Missions” which enables the university to make use of its resources and privatise some of its activities. The university enjoys a high degree of flexibility in administrative affairs to achieve economy and optimise the use of its diversified resources, such as staff, classrooms, laboratories, teaching media. The 1997 economic crisis had a direct impact on KUT as the Government cut the level of budget allocation to universities.

KUT changed the crisis to an opportunity through seeking means of cutting expenses and encouraging students and staff to follow the organisational culture, "Integrity, courtesy, cleanliness and economy comprise KUT's ethical practice". These adjustments enabled the university to fulfil its mission and maintain the quality and standard of its instruction.

*Our budget allocation is based on a strategy of university development. We normally make all staff who get involved with finance affairs understand the strategy first, so when they request budget, they must express goals in a way consistent with strategy which is the key principle for an allocation. We use a technique of 3 Rs including 1) Review is to check jobs that need to be changed or improved? 2) Redeploy is to cancel some activities, 3) Replace is to allocate budget for better activities or projects. (The Chief of Planning Division in translation)*

The University has the following sources of revenue:

- the Government allocated budget
- donations
- tuition, fees, and services
- investments and use of assets
- use of the land entrusted to the University.

For auditing, the University uses its own finance and assets regulations as determined by the University Council. KUT's Internal Auditing Unit and the Auditing and Assessment Board, both report directly to the University Council on audit budget management, performance, and administration. The Office of the National Auditor is responsible for financial post-auditing. KUT joined the Project to Augment Correctness and Transparency of State Organisation through cooperation with the Office of the Auditor-General of Thailand (OAG). The revenue generation process as well as procurements can be viewed through electronic media so that the

general public and all concerned parties have access to sufficient and timely information.

For budget management, the University prepares its annual revenue and expenditure budgets which are categorised by project according to the plan. If the University Council approves, then the budget can be activated for that particular year. With a block grant the budget allocation can be more flexible and more effective. Most of the budget goes to activities designed to fulfil the mission of teaching and research development. According to KUT's financial reports, between 1998 and 2005, the Government contribution averaged 72% and between 2006 and 2013 averaged 67% suggesting a gradual decline in dependence on the governance grant (see appendix B2). KUT had a ratio of 70: 30 (government allocation: revenue from other sources), while other public universities had a ratio of 80: 20 suggesting that KUT is slightly more independent than most public universities. In 2000, Asia Week Magazine ranked the best Science and Technology Universities of the Asia-Pacific region using many factors. KUT was ranked 9<sup>th</sup> out of 39 universities in terms of the instructional budget.

*70% of revenue comes from the Government, 25% from tuition fees and 5% from other revenues such as dormitory, building to lease, etc. KUT is situated upcountry, so we cannot make as much money as some universities in Bangkok but our lecturers can find a variety of external sources of funds. The budget from the Government is not stable and depends on the economy and politics. Politics is about the Government's policy. If policy supports science and technology, we can submit projects related to science and technology to gain more revenue. (The Chief of Planning Division in translation)*

### **5.3.2 Academic affairs**

Besides the expectation to be a model of higher education administration, KUT is also expected to foster academic innovation in order to produce new era graduates needed to support a newly industrialised

country now and in the future. KUT aims to ensure that all programs will produce graduates endowed with the required characteristics including 1) having relevant skills and capability, and 2) reflecting norms of morality and ethics. Creating each program is based on achieving academic and research excellence through a multi-disciplinary approach. The content of every program is adapted to be compatible with the community in order to encourage students to learn to apply theory to real conditions. The important principles underlying the curriculum of each program consist of training the learner in knowledge, wisdom, person-hood, and goodness; stressing a science and technology foundation; the intermingling of theory and practice in the form of cooperative education; and an interdisciplinary approach to instruction (Suranaree University of Technology, 2000).

#### *5.3.2.1 Cooperative Education and Career Development*

Since its establishment KUT has aimed to connect the university with the private sector in order to develop technology in an appropriate direction and enhance the academic strength of KUT. Since 1993 cooperative education has combined classroom education with real work site experience as part of the undergraduate curriculum. KUT was the first university in Thailand to adopt cooperative education so that the student may receive work experience in different cultures, instilling a wider vision for the student. The valuable aspect of Cooperative Education and Career Development reflect the contributions of autonomy allowing the university to interface with industry in a greater level than the public universities.

KUT has maintained its leadership in cooperative education, as evidenced by KUT receiving the 2010 National Distinguished Cooperative Education Award. KUT's Rector received the 2010 and 2011 Distinguished Cooperative Education Administrator award in a National Education Institution. Moreover, KUT has served as the host institution for the Lower Northeast Cooperative Education Development Network, with the Network receiving the 2010 and 2011 National Distinguished Awards. In the arena of international cooperative education, KUT is a Silver Member of the World Association for Cooperative Education (WACE) and was a co-host for the

international conference on International Cooperative and Work-Integrated Education: Expanding Sustainable Networking during 20-22 July 2011.

#### 5.3.2.2 Courses

In 2011, there were a total of six institutes and ninety-four curricular programs offered to students including thirty-three programs for a Bachelor degree, thirty-four programs for a Master degree, and twenty-seven programs for a Doctoral degree (see appendix B3). The six institutes are:

1. Institute of Science,
2. Institute of Social Technology,
3. Institute of Agricultural Technology,
4. Institute of Medicine,
5. Institute of Nursing, and
6. Institute of Engineering.

#### 5.3.2.3 Tuition fees

There have been many concerns about the introduction of tuition fees. As a state owned university KUT does not aim for profit and tuition fees must be in line with the regulations and social conditions. If tuition fees are set too high, there will be a social reaction against the university. KUT does provide scholarships to poor students in order to ensure that access to study in the university is not limited to the wealthy (Nakornthap, 2005).

*If people ask me that tuition fees will increase or not, I will ask them back if students have the rights to choose universities to study. Why do some students want to study at Harvard University although the tuition fees are expensive? Because of reputation? When KUT was open, people said that our tuition fees were expensive. If you include other expenses, not only credit and compared with other autonomous universities, KUT is in the middle range. (The Assistant Rector for Academic Affairs in translation)*



As mentioned, increasing tuition fees may affect students but the freedom of financial management enables KUT to organise a variety of funds to help meet an individual student's needs (Suranaree University of Technology, 2008, August 11). There are three types of funds including:

1. Scholarship for students who have achieved outstanding academic performance: This scholarship is for second-fourth year undergraduate students who have a grade of at least B+ and do not receive any scholarship from other sources.
2. Fund for education: This fund receives money from people who are interested in donating to undergraduate students who have low income until it affects their studies. They must have a reasonable GPA and possibly finish studies.
3. Emergency loan: This fund is to assist students faced with an urgent financial problem. Undergraduate students can get a maximum loan of 5,000 baht per person and postgraduate students can get maximum loan of 10,000 baht. Such loans are interest free.

#### *5.3.2.4 Admission without Testing*

KUT is also the first university in Thailand to use a quota basis, considering only high school transcripts, without requiring written tests for admitting undergraduate students. The quota system is designed to provide educational opportunities to the regional and rural areas in Thailand. Students who are interested in gaining entry through the quota system must achieve a minimum grade point average of 2.75. With this quota, students can choose their major field of study prior to admission. KUT believes that it can respond to the Governmental policy of creating educational opportunity and equality for students in every region and province.

#### *5.3.2.5 Research*

Research and development is a principal mission of KUT for supporting science and technology in Thailand. A system has been created to support research through which the Institute for Research and

Development supervises and coordinates all university research activities, while the Department of Research within each academic institute helps facilitate faculty research and coordinate research with the Institute for Research and Development. This system is unique for KUT and distinguishes KUT from other institutions. KUT aims to support scientific and technological research and development at both national and international levels, especially high technology industrial development. The two types of research are as follows:

1. Research and development in a particular field under the Departments of Research. The University carries out research in various fields such as engineering, agricultural technology, science, and social technology.
2. Interdisciplinary research and development under the Institute for Research and Development.

*KUT focuses on research of knowledge formation for enhancing science and technology. We have our own Institute of Research and Development which is responsible for managing and coordinating the university research and development affairs. It also promotes integrated research for excellence in science and technology at the global level. We have fewer lecturers but the number of publications per lecturer is in the first ranking among Thai universities. (The Chief of Division of Academic Support in translation)*

#### *5.3.2.6 Educational Quality Assurance*

Educational quality assurance is an important tool to ensure KUT's readiness in all dimensions and has been part of KUT's management since 1998. This aligns with the National Education Bill of Thailand, which sets out requirements for internal and external quality assurance. The criteria of internal quality assurance are set out by the Office of the Higher Education Commission and the criteria of external quality assurance are set out by the Office for National Education Standards and Quality Assessment (Public Organisation). External assurance is normally conducted every five years, while internal assurance is conducted every year which is called "SELF

ASSESSMENT REPORT (SAR)". The committees of quality assurance include both internal and external experts. In 2010, KUT received cooperation from internal and external distinguished professionals to assist in applying an internal evaluation of educational quality at the institutional level. To evaluate the university's readiness, KUT has been using the OCHE criteria set by the Office of the Commission on Higher Education. In 2010 KUT scored 4.78 out of 5 (an excellent level), with 20 out of 23 indicators achieved.

#### *5.3.2.7 Academic achievements*

These are KUT's academic achievements after establishment in 1990:

- KUT has the highest number of PhD qualified lecturers and the highest research publications per researcher in Thailand.
- KUT was ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in research and 7<sup>th</sup> in teaching among Thai higher education institutes in 2006 by the Office of the Higher Education Commission.
- KUT was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> of Thai public universities based on graduating students and research in 2009 and ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> ranking of overall Thai universities in 2009.
- KUT gained an evaluation for its educational quality as excellent in 2010 by Office of the Higher Education Commission.
- KUT was ranked 1<sup>st</sup> for Physics Programmes in 2007 and 2010 by The Thailand Research Fund.
- KUT was selected as one of 9 research universities in 2010 by the Office of the Higher Education Commission and KUT was the youngest university.
- KUT was ranked 12<sup>th</sup> out of 141 Thai higher educations selected in World University rankings in 2010 by the Webometrics University Ranking.

- KUT was ranked 9<sup>th</sup> of Thai universities and 958<sup>th</sup> of universities in the world in 2011 by the Webometrics University Ranking.
- KUT was ranked 94<sup>th</sup> of universities in Asia in Natural Science and 141<sup>th</sup> in IT & Engineering in 2011 by QS Quacquarelli Symonds Limited.
- KUT is the model for Cooperative Education among Thai universities where students work full time as employees at the work-place for at least one semester. The result shows that it is successful for enhancing students' work skills and helping students to find employment. In 2012 KUT was selected to be the World Association for Cooperative Education-International Satellite Office for the Asia Pacific region by the World Association for Cooperative Education – (WACE).

### **5.3.3 Personnel**

To administer personnel, KUT has its own committee to set up the regulations for personnel management titled “Regulations of KUT’s Personnel Administration 1991”. There are three types of university staff 1) Academic administration staff, 2) Academic staff, and 3) Support staff and all staff are regarded as state enterprise officers. They all are under the university Act. KUT has its own style of personnel administration based on job tasks, support for missions and a merit system. All operations of personnel administration are under the supervision of the Personnel Administration Committee appointed by University Council.

#### ***5.3.3.1 Recruitment***

KUT started to recruit new staff in 1993. For Academic staff, KUT selected only qualified people with a minimum of a Master’s Degree who must complete a two-year probation before being confirmed as permanent university staff. KUT has set up a system of personnel administration based on a merit system and the principle of “difficult entry – easy exit” (Nakornthap, 2005). As an autonomous university, KUT can recruit its

qualified staff whenever the institutes/faculties and the personnel board think it is appropriate. The processes of recruiting staff do not take too long time, which is beneficial for the university. Turnover rate of KUT is relatively low for both academic and support staff, which is only almost 1%.

*Our turnover rate is quite low for both academic and support staff, almost 1% only. (The Chief of Division of Personnel in translation)*

For five years after the formal opening the ratio of the educational background of KUT academic staff was 62: 38: 0 (Doctoral: Master's: Bachelor's), which was higher than the standard of 30: 60: 10 laid down by the Ministry of University Affairs (Nakornthap, 2005). This supports claims that KUT has the potential to produce qualified students. Another key indicator of success for KUT is fewer staff but more workload achievement. In 2000, KUT had a ratio of 1: 27 (lecture: student). When comparing this ratio with the standard of 1: 10 laid down by the Ministry of University Affairs.

In addition, KUT has more flexibility to develop the staff salary scales in order to attract more qualified lecturers to work for KUT, academic staff in particular. Salary depends on experiences and skills. However, the university adheres to the principle of fewer staff but high productivity.

*In the past, salary for academic staff was not good; it could not attract good qualified people to work. We redesigned our pay structure for competing with external markets. Good lecturers can bring good students. Our lecturers' salary is ranked 1st of all autonomous and public universities in Thailand. We give them appropriate compensation and we review salary every couple of years. Both academic and support staff get the same welfare but different salary because the importance of the job is different. (The Chief of Division of Personnel in translation)*

#### 5.3.3.2 Personal assessment

Personal assessment takes place three times per year. Each semester all staff receive assessment forms to set out their responsibilities during a specific period. This form will be sent to their supervisors in order

to evaluate their subordinates' work load. Supervisors check and submit the forms to the Performance Assessment Committee.

#### **5.3.4 Governance**

KUT is Thailand's first public university to become operationally autonomous. As the Royal Thai Government's policy was for all public universities to become autonomous by the end of 2002, many organisations have visited KUT to study its operations and administrative processes. Thus, KUT has been considered a model public autonomous university to demonstrate the concepts and experiences of autonomy.

The system of audits and appraisals for both KUT and the Rector has been set up by the Kingston University of Technology Council, with the aim of complying with the principles of good governance based on the powers and duties of the University Council as stated in the Kingston University of Technology Act, B.E. 2533 (1990). The university council meeting is held twice a year. The committee of University council who are responsible for conducting auditing and evaluative reports, have to prepare and send the reports to the University Council.

### **5.4 The University performance**

The mission of every public university in Thailand includes four main capabilities; 1) producing quality graduates, 2) conducting research, 3) providing academic services, and 4) maintaining arts and culture. KUT has one further special mission which is *Technology Adaptation, Transfer, and Development* as KUT is a science and technology university. Being autonomous is the four key components of finance, academic affairs, personnel, and governance, can affect the success in fulfilling these five missions.

#### **5.4.1 Producing quality graduates**

Kingston University of Technology has created many curricula to develop its students' capabilities. Between 2007 and 2012 KUT admitted at least 3000 students to undergraduate and post graduate degree programmes each year. In 2007 and 2008 the majority of students were

admitted by quota, however between 2009 and 2011 the numbers of quota students dropped below the numbers admitted by means of examination, admissions and re-entry. In 2012, the numbers of quota students were again the majority of those admitted (see appendix B5).

The number of graduates tended to increase each year between 2006 and 2010 with a small decrease in 2011. A greater proportion of graduates admitted by quota achieve honours than do those admitted by other means (see appendix B6). Regarding the employment of graduates, of the 2010 cohort of those graduating with bachelor degrees 87.62% were employed or self-employed within one year of completing their degrees (excluding those pursuing higher degrees, enlisted in the military or ordained). Most employers were satisfied with graduates' knowledge, virtues and wisdom. The Institute of Research and Development is one institute in KUT which is responsible to conduct a survey in order to improve the university's potential. Satisfactions of the KUT Graduates' End Users is one survey which is annually conducted. The End Users were satisfied with KUT graduates at a level of at least 4 on a 5-point scale (see appendix B7).

#### **5.4.2 Conducting research**

Kingston University of Technology aims to become a mid-sized higher education institution, which is strong in basic scientific research, particularly the national and international advancement of knowledge of biotechnology, energy, and materials science. Also, KUT is committed to become an international centre for both national and international scholars to adapt and transfer research knowledge to the local public. KUT's emphasis on the research mission is equal to that of its teaching mission. The Institute for Research and Development is responsible for KUT research management, including planning, locating, and raising research and equipment funding. Moreover, KUT was selected by the Office of the Commission on Higher Education (OCHE) to be one of the nine "national research universities," and has operated continually in accordance with three strategic research dimensions: building a world-class quality knowledge base, efficient research management with good governance, and tackling national issues and problems (Suranaree University of

Technology, 2011). To achieve this KUT has focused on research that responds to regional and national needs, the development of research support systems and raising research capability. The main elements of these measures are described briefly in the following paragraphs.

➤ *Research that Responds to Regional and National Immediate Needs*

KUT does not focus only on building a world class body of knowledge but also on objectively resolving national issues, which is a goal of the university's research activities. Many research outputs have been applied to solving particular problems such as "research for value adding and increasing the volume of farm products" and "research for energy savings and the environment".

➤ *Continuous Development of Research Support System and Procedure*

The university maintains research resources of the allocation of grants that reflect the research potential and capability of faculties as measured by the university's research indicators. These grant allocations comprise 1) post-doctoral grants, post graduate grants for faculties that achieve high research productivity, 2) doctoral grants, research grants for research centres, groups, units and laboratories and 3) grants for patents arising from applied research or international journal publications, etc.

KUT intends to strengthen the cooperation between research teams in order to achieve research outputs which can address major social as well as national and international issues. The research network group or people who intend to build up the research centre of excellence should be committed to achieve their particular research goals. Currently there are four research network groups, 1) Agricultural industry and protein technology 2) Advanced material 3) Fundamental and theoretical science 4) Advanced renewable energy and energy preserving development research network groups.

➤ *Raising Research Capability*



As being one of the Research Universities, this has encouraged faculty to conduct more research activities, especially to build the university's research productivity. The dissemination of research and academic articles has increased since 2008 and in 2012 KUT faculty published 652 articles in international journals, while at the national level publications has been less emphasised with only 184 articles. The volume of publications achieved by faculty in 2012 is equivalent to two international publications per individual, which compares well with the national average which is lower (see appendix B8).

#### *5.4.2.1 Support for Budgets, Equipment and Technology to Facilitate Research*

With a number of highly qualified faculty experienced in a variety of fields at national and international levels, it results in receiving more funding from non-governmental sources. The number of projects has increased steadily each year as has the level of funding. However, the total research funding in 2012 decreased from 367,535,290 million baht in 2011 to 247,136,593 million baht. Of 247,136,593 million, 213,022,866 million came from external sources, while the Government allocated 34,113,727 million for the research purposes to the university (see appendix B9). This funding comes from the Government through the consideration of the National Research Council of Thailand (NRCT), and comes from external sources such as Thailand Research Fund, National Science and Technology Development Agency, PTT Public Company Limited, The Siam Cement Public Company Limited, and private companies such as the Royal Golden Jubilee Ph.D. Program, and Young Researcher Potential Development Grants.

#### **5.4.3 Technology adaptation, transfer and development**

KUT, striving for its "Society Companion University" status, has carried out its missions on technology adaptation and transfer. The office of Technopolis, acts as the focal centre for adapting and transferring to farmer groups, community enterprises, new entrepreneurs, industrial manufacturers, and the general public. The technology and science bodies

of knowledge result from the university research. The aims are to bring about the proper uses of technology to increase productivity, and to help the community be self-sufficient. Moreover, research outputs, inventions and innovation have, in effect, been commercialised, examples of several accomplishments are listed below.

➤ *KUT 32 Districts 32 Doctors Project*

KUT 32 Districts 32 Doctors Project has the purpose to adapt and transfer technology to the local communities of Nakhon Ratchasima. The project is expected to adapt and transfer bodies of knowledge and technology for mutually developing and resolving issues relevant to the local communities.

➤ *Kingston University of Technology Network of Technology Clinic*

Kingston University of Technology Network of Technology Clinic was established to provide consulting, technology transfer and university technology information services to those who are interested based on specialised areas.

➤ *Intellectual Property*

The KUT Intellectual Property Management Office is responsible for promoting the commercial use of research, inventions and innovations of the university. Also, consulting services are provided to the public. In 2012, the total of thirty-two contributions can be divided into seventeen patents and fifteen copyrights (Suranaree University of Technology, 2013b).

#### **5.4.4 Establishing academic services**

For KUT, the primary purpose of this mission is to distribute innovatively technological and scientific knowledge to society, which will help strengthen both the local community and the nation as a whole. The technology adaptation, transfer and development activities have a significant contribution to this mission. Besides those projects run by “The office of Technopolis”, KUT also achieves this mission through programmes such as the Academic and Scientific Camps, the Laboratory service and Kingston Agricultural Fair. These programmes are successful in terms of the number of participants. Especially, the Academic and Scientific Camps

programme that had a total of 5,187 participants in 2012 (Suranaree University of Technology, 2013b).

#### **5.4.5 Maintaining arts and culture**

One function of KUT is to promote and disseminate the local arts and culture of the North-eastern Region in order to educate and raise more awareness in the community and amongst local people of the value of arts and cultures as well as local knowledge.

*For maintaining arts and culture, we have to say that the Government give us only a small amount of funding - about 200,000 baht - because it is a minor mission, we need to top this up with about 2,000,000 baht so, each year we have to prepare a budget for this mission of about 2-3,000,000 baht. We have tried to support this mission for maintaining our folk arts. (The Vice Rector of Planning in translation)*

The university also organise a variety of activities related to creation and support the network of arts, culture and local knowledge towards public. These include music and performing arts coaching and student arts and culture exhibitions etc.

#### **5.5 Summary of KUT background**

KUT did not face transitional problems as it was established as an autonomous university. Prof. Dr. Wichit Srisa-arn, the first Rector of KUT invested time in promoting and explaining to ensure all staff understood what the university's goals were. He laid the foundations of a new management system that would enable all staff to work toward the same goal to support and develop the university.

When considering the quality of graduates, it shows that the number of honours graduates tended to increase each year, from forty-five students in 2007, to eighty-one students in 2011 – approximately 4 % of all students (see appendix B6). Students from the Quota admission who mostly come from rural areas and poor family, tended to gain more honours than students from the Admission system. Moreover, students' employment shows that

85%-90% of students from all institutes were able to get jobs in 2010 (see appendix B7), demonstrating that the university can produce high quality of students.

KUT has established a special programme of “Cooperative Education” enabling students to develop and practice their skills in a work site ensuring that they will become more employable. KUT is the first university to develop this approach and is considered as the leader in incorporating work experience into the curriculum. Managing cooperative education programmes, which involves a lot of engagement with external organisations may be more easily achieved by autonomous institutions such as KUT with greater flexibility to engage with their community etc.

KUT academic staff’ salaries rank 1<sup>st</sup> amongst Thai autonomous and public universities. KUT is prepared to pay well but the university also requires staff to perform well to retain their positions. The greater flexibility available to KUT as an autonomous university enables more rigorous reviews of performance and the ability to make continued employment dependent on meeting performance expectations. However, the turnover rate of KUT is relatively low at almost 1%.

In terms of funding, KUT receives funds from the Government in the form of a block grant as do other autonomous universities. KUT normally receives 70% of its total funding from the Government and it needs to find the remaining 30%. KUT can attract 30% of its funding needs from non-government sources while some universities can attract up to 60%. It is possible that KUT’s location restricts its ability to generate non-government sources of income due to the remoteness from large enterprises or organisations, which mainly are situated in Bangkok. An increase in tuition fees to generate more revenue is also difficult as the targeted students come from poorer economic backgrounds than students in Bangkok. In relation to research funding, the university tended to receive increasing funds every year. In 2012, KUT received the total funding of 247,136,593 baht. With this funding, KUT could manage budget to produce a great number of publications, intellectual property, and other outputs. Technopolis Office has been established to help increase productivity through better

uses of technology in the way that the community can be more self-sufficient. The knowledge in the form of research output and intellectual property can be commercialised to gain income through providing academic services to society.

When compared with other missions, the Government paid less attention to maintaining arts and cultures when considering the budget allocated. It was insufficient for creating activities to maintain the nation's arts and cultures for a whole year. Even though, KUT managed its own budget on top of the Government funding, it was comparatively small amount in relation to the amount spent for academic and research affairs. KUT is a science and technology university, most projects were produced to respond to science and technology development which can become outcomes to present to the Government when requesting the next annual budget. This mission is not to make money, and thus it was rather overlooked by both Government and KUT.

## **5.6 Lessons learned from KUT**

This part is divided into three sub-themes including:

1. The influences of institutionalism on KUT backgrounds: this sub-theme is dealing with how the institutional pressures impact the universities in terms of their establishment and transition if applicable;
2. The institutional complexity and KUT conceptions: this heading is discussed in the topics around the extent of the contrast logics KUT has experienced and how they affect KUT by utilising the four characteristics of organisational filter as a frame. These four characteristics comprise of field position, structure, ownership/governance and identity; and
3. The responses of KUT to the institutional complexity, which is the discussion around the area of how KUT responds to such complexity in relation to its internal structure and practices

developed and how they affect KUT's performance to achieve the four main missions.

#### **5.6.1 The influence of institutionalism – KUT background**

KUT was the first autonomous university, which has been established within the new emerging context, where the universities have been pushed to operate autonomously by the state. There is no transformation from the bureaucratic system to the autonomous model in this university. However, the creation, structure and practices of the university are useful reflections of the influences of institutionalism on the university.

KUT was initiated under the desire of the collective educational professionals who favoured the concept of university autonomy and the enforcement of the First 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education Development. These professionals' idea was influenced by the organisational form of highly ranked universities in the Western countries, particularly the United Kingdom. They interpreted organisational forms taken for granted in Western universities as being the ideal standard to apply across Universities in Thailand in order to be effective. They diffused these ideas across the sector through their network, through the normative mechanism as an example (D'Aunno et al., 1991; Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004).

These professionals held significant roles in the state educational agencies after returning to Thailand from overseas. Among them, there is a leading proponent of university autonomy in Thailand, regarded as the leader of Thai higher education reform, Prof. Dr. Wichit Srisa-an, who later became the first Rector of KUT and grounded the university structure and practices at its settlement. This professional group thus, used their power and interests to formulate a number of Thai higher education reform plans and policies including the First 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education Development. The two key contents of the plan are for the universities to develop equal opportunity for those who are in the remote

area of the central country and those newly established university must now be an autonomous university from its inception.

The establishment of KUT reflects the prominent influences of institutional pressures – normative, regulatory and cultural-cognitive – and their mechanisms – normative, coercive and mimetic – on its development (DiMaggio & Powell, 2000; Scott, 2008a). It seems that the normative pressure created by the collective professionals through their network – normative mechanism – and the regulatory pressure generated from the state through the legislated plan and policies – coercive mechanism – are the fundamental pressures brought to bear on KUT's beginnings. However, the cultural-cognitive framework is the main determinant of the University's inception because it influences the idea of university autonomy amongst those professional and academic elite (Thornton et al., 2005). They perceived and interpreted the organisational, structural and institutional behaviours of elite western universities as providing the ideal model for Thai higher educational institutions. As a result, KUT reflects the characteristics of a highly mimetic mechanism – mimicking and adopting the forms and structures of a foreign body which has evolved from and within a foreign context into its own form. This is in line with Scott (2008b)'s argument that the power of institutional pillars when they are well aligned is tremendous.

### **5.6.2 Institutional complexity and KUT conception**

Thai higher education is emerging as a field with a high degree of fragmentation and moderate centralisation due to a number of uncoordinated logics (Meyer et al., 1987; Pache & Santos, 2010b) and the resource control of the state (Greenwood et al., 2010; Meyer et al., 1987). Such competing logics generate the tension within the universities located within the sector. However, the level of such complexity they experience may vary depending on a number of factors in relation to their characteristics such as; field position, structure, ownership and governance and identity (Greenwood et al., 2011). The notion can be applied to examine the extent to which KUT has experienced the level of enduring institutional complexity and the effects of that complexity.

In terms of the field position, KUT was officially established and entered into the emerging field – Thai higher education sector – as the first autonomous university in 1990. Theoretically, there are a number of institutionalists claiming the characteristics of central organisations located in mature fields in accordance with their status, size, age and visibility but giving less attention to the organisations within emerging fields (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001). Even though KUT had high visibility because it has been created as a role model of university autonomy for the other public universities, it was an emerging university within the emerging context. Due to its newcomer status and age, therefore, it could be regarded as a peripheral organisation (Greenwood et al., 2011). The university also had less association with other universities whose behaviours were shaped by the precedent institutional prescriptions, which meant that KUT was less constrained by such institutional prescriptions (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). Consequently, it was more likely that KUT at that point in time experienced less tension from the institutional complexity encompassing the sector. With less pressure of the competing logics, KUT had more chance to develop at its own discretion in order to respond to the institutional complexity (Ahmadjian & Robinson, 2001).

The decision process of KUT reflected through its structure was related to the most influential group of the university – the executive team. By virtue of the ownership and governance compositions, this executive team exploited their power to respond to the competing logics by prioritising and interpreting the norms they imported into the university (D'Aunno et al., 1991). This was evident during the three-year period – 1990 -1993, where KUT formed its operational system before officially opening for student admission. During those years, it was the university's first Rector, who played the most dominant role of laying the university foundation in terms of developing the appropriate structure and practices in response to the demands of society and the Government. Prof. Dr. Wichit Srisa-an, the “Founder Rector”, one of the professional leaders who favoured the idea of university autonomy, formed an executive team who shared the same orientation to govern the university. Thus, KUT's structural position – its organisational decision process – is heavily tied to the referent actors in the



field-level – the Government. As a result, the executive team led by the Rector is more likely to give voice to the state preferential logics, which are stipulated in the higher education plans and policies and embrace such perspective into the university decision and activities (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). This is in line with Fligstein' s work (1993) noting that chief executives have a tendency to comply with the regulatory demands and that interpretation is rooted into the organisational decisions and strategies. Moreover, even though, KUT is an autonomous university, its major source of fund comes from the Government. Thus, the degree of the university dependence on the state is relatively high, which means that KUT is more likely to prioritise the state demands over the others (Lounsbury, 2007).

In order for KUT to advance institutional complexity effectively, it needs to clearly define its identity, answering the question “who are we” – and fit into one of the social categories at the field level (Kraatz & Block, 2008). However, as a matter of fact, KUT is a newcomer within the emerging context. The university, therefore, did not have previous history, norms, values and membership in any social category when it first entered the sector. Consequently, it is very important to KUT to develop its identity in order to diversify certain options to deal with the competing logics (Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014). In an alternative interpretation, due to lacking previous history, norms and values, it might be easier for KUT to develop its own identity and local logics to a better fit with the new norms and values of the emerging field. Taking the development of identity along with the composition of field position, structural position and ownership and governance into play, it is apparent that overall KUT experienced less tensions generated from the competing demands. Given the uniqueness and characteristics of KUT, the university has greater freedom to develop its own local logics and discretions to address to such complicated demands and to develop its own identity on its own clear terms (Kraatz & Block, 2008).

### **5.6.3 The response of KUT to institutional complexity**

The distinctive characteristics of KUT discussed in the preceding section offer KUT some advantages in responding strategically to such an array of complex demands. As an autonomous university, KUT has to

accomplish the four main social missions, which will be monitored by the state through the quality assurance mechanism (see Chapter 2). Simultaneously, KUT also has to be less dependent on the state funding. Therefore, the university will need to create efficiencies and try to earn its own income in order to survive on increasingly limited resources. Consequently, the university will have to take this commercial goal into account.

Emphasising only commercial goals may not be an appropriate response. This places KUT into a difficult circumstance in terms of how to manage its own enterprise in response to these conflicting demands. Rather than indiscriminately complying with a set of demands, the executive team was also aware of the potential risks of losing support from the other actors. As a result, KUT developed its local logics in combination with the social missions and commercial logics as its organisational identity in order to secure legitimacy and survival (Battilana & Dorado, 2010). The university identified itself as an autonomous local research university and determined its purposes in the university's foundation stone of vision and commitments. The local logic reflects that the executive team hybridises the institutional pluralistic demands at the organisational level and specifies a clear goal of the university in terms of how they want the organisation to be and operate. The explicit self-perception guided the initiation of the university's internal management practices in order to address the institutional pluralistic demands and to achieve its desirable and sustainable outcomes (Battilana & Dorado, 2010).

KUT combines the greater level of autonomy enhancing flexibility in governance, personnel, financial and academic affairs with the intact practices of commercial and social demands. As a result, KUT has developed its own unique central management system, to operate those four main areas. Such a central management system is "combined service and coordinated task". This system promotes the university as self-sufficient and cost-effective, which responds to the commercial demands. However, it is believed that responding to such commercial demands will also serve the social missions of the university (D'aunno et al., 2000).

In terms of governance, the university council as the highest authorised body has to ensure the university's good governance by assuring accountability and transparency. The council structure in terms of the member selection is extremely important because how KUT responds to such multiple demands will be reflective of their preferences and values (Oliver, 1991). In order to ensure the university's legitimacy and meet the various demands of both internal and external constituencies socially and commercially, the KUT university council has developed its committees from both influential groups – social and commercial. Accordingly the council structure consists of the representatives of academic staff, the Thai industrial sector and at least four local experts (Suranaree University of Technology, 2012). The fine mixture helps KUT to transcend the complex demands effectively because even though, each group of constituencies gives voice to their favourable logics and blocks the others, those ambiguous ideas will be worked out in the council meeting before exercising in the practical level resulting in the centralised idea and convergent means of how to operate the university effectively and sustainably. In addition, because of the centralisation idea of management and goal achievement, it can discourage internal conflicts (Pache, 2012).

KUT blends a social services logic and a commercial logic for managing personnel, finance and academic affairs by utilising the central management system – combined services and coordinated task – into practices. Although, the central management system promotes self-efficiency – cost effectiveness, which is embedded in commercial logic side, when it is mutually worked with those three schemes, helps the university to fulfil the social missions, which seems to be the ultimate goal of Thai higher education. With the determination of being the local research university, KUT is cautious of a number of factors that might impact the accomplishment of the university's goals. Such factors include local needs but not limited to public needs and local industrial sector demands and the nature of targeted students. The characteristics of the targeted students are different than those who live in the urban area. They mostly are from low-income families and have lower academic skills due to inadequate resource facilities in the region. Therefore, responding to the commercial logic by

increasing tuition fees may not be suitable and may cause illegitimacy in the actors' eyes. Thus, the key strategy of KUT to comply with a commercial logic while validating its social missions is to reduce its costs along with attempting to access alternative source of resources, evidently from the local industrial sector. The central management system of the university is very helpful and it focuses on centralised services and coordinated missions resulting in a better control of budget management, human resource demand and the reduction duplicate functions in each faculty.

A robust financial management system plays a crucial role in the running of the university. As mentioned in Chapter 5, KUT University receives funding from the Thai Government and their own revenue resources in a ratio of 70:30. Whilst other public universities have an 80:20 ratio, KUT is able to continue operations with lower governmental aid through the implementation of a central management system. This reduces operational costs with the remaining money sought from the local industrial sector in the form of providing academic services allowing KUT to avoid raising the tuition fees to prevent the loss of legitimacy from the society. The lucrative funding from the industrial sector however, restricts the avenues of research to the needs of those investors. Although this reduces the quality and quantity of research in other areas, the local community remains the main focus for KUT in terms of their founding ideals and principles.

The central management system not only supports the financial management of the university, but also their academic affairs. Through the efficient pooling of operational resources within the university, KUT has greater resources to invest in higher quality teaching aids and materials and research activities. This allows students to work with modern scientific equipment and enables them to better understand the underlying principles and ideas behind the technology. The substantial academic affairs management leads to producing quality graduates and researches, which are the primary purposes of the university to serve the society. KUT is mindful of this point at the beginning stage. Thus, while the considerable financial management enhances the academic facilities, the courses and curricular offered to the students are designed to be compatible with the

community. Most of the courses are connected to the local private sector needs and KUT builds a strong relationship with the local private sector through the Cooperative educational programme. The standards of humanity along with the intellectual skills are interpolated in the multi-disciplinary approach of every curriculum in order to nurture desirable social skills and characteristics of good citizenship. As a result of the components of courses and curriculum, the graduates are ensured to be attractive to the labour market, which means that they are more likely to be employed.

It is evident that the use of a hybrid strategy between the commercial logic and social services logic with the academic affairs management is contributing to KUT's success in its social missions: producing quality graduates and researchers in particular. The annual reports show the upward trend of graduate employment and employer satisfaction rates, which are around 85% - 90% and 4 out of 5 marks, respectively. Moreover, there is an increasing demand in the Cooperative education from the local workplaces, which reflects the favourable reputation of the programme. Regarding the research mission, KUT is designed as one of the nine national research universities. Among those nine universities, KUT is the youngest. In addition, KUT has the highest ratio of research publications per researcher at international level, which is 1.94:1.

The management of personnel also benefits from the central management system through the efficient and combined use of administrative staff. This reduces operational costs and allows KUT to attract more highly qualified lecturers through increased monetary incentives. Higher calibre teaching staff not only raises the level of education in the university, but also the quality of research undertaken and produced. However, due to the communal pooling of teaching staff the workload is more varied and greater than normal. This is evident in the high ratio of students per full-time lecturers at KUT at 27:1 (as at 2000) in comparison to the standard ratio of 10:1 as prescribed by the Ministry of University Affairs. Naturally the remuneration of the university staff mirrors the higher and more variable workload required of them. This is evident in

the much higher salaries offered at KUT which has led to the greater retention of their staff, with a turn-over rate of just 1% per year.

In terms of maintaining arts and culture KUT University applies a decoupling strategy whereby their normative or prescriptive structures are separated from their operational structures (Bromley & Powell, 2012). This too is managed by KUT's central management system. Where the legal requirements of maintaining arts and culture are adhered to, this is accomplished using as few resources as possible. This is largely due to the low monetary return of the arts and cultural sector. The remaining resources are then distributed to more profitable areas within KUT such as; research, producing quality graduates and academic services. Thus, the social components of KUT University are met through the application of robust commercial logic.

The ability of KUT to sustain their hybrid strategy so successfully is due to the robust management of their external social and commercial logic demands. The central management system utilises "selective coupling" to satisfy institutional referents thereby securing greater support and maximising returns from these external demands based on the resources available (Pache & Santos, 2013b). This not only creates a self-strengthening cycle of demand from external sources and supply from KUT but also has the potential for growth (Pache & Santos, 2013b).

The perseverance of KUT's hybrid strategy is also a direct result of a lack of internal conflict (Glenn, 2000; Pache & Santos, 2010a). This is largely due to the initial establishment of KUT as an autonomous university which, unlike other universities, prevents historical norms or values from seeding conflict within the organisation.

The commercial logic component of KUT is achieved through their central management system. The subsequent effect of this system on the financial, personnel and academic management allows the university to meet their social services logic components. Through efficient financial management, KUT is able to successfully achieve a significant number of indicators set by the Government and accreditation agencies of their four

main missions. As such, the underlying social logic of KUT is achieved through self-sustaining hybrid organisational strategies using a mixture of commercial and social logic.

As a consequence of a becoming a well-managed multiple institutional identity by utilising hybrid strategy over the two decades, KUT has moved from its peripheral position in the field to become a central organisation. Even though the size of KUT is not as big as some others, the successful achievement of its goals and constituencies expectations within twenty-four years since its establishment has raised KUT to a high-status organisation within the field. With the dominant hierarchy in the field level, KUT attracts attention from and influences the other universities to follow its journey (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

## **Chapter 6**

### **Eden Thai University of Technology (ETUT)**

In this chapter, the second case study, ETUT, is discussed under six main headings:

1. History
2. Becoming an autonomous university
3. The university administration
4. The university performance
5. Summary of the background
6. Lesson to be learnt from ETUT

The name of the university has been protected by using a pseudonym of “Eden Thai University of Technology” (ETUT).

#### **6.1 History**

ETUT is one of leading technology academies in Thailand which aims at teaching and researching in engineering and technology as well as serving industry. It was established as a result that Thailand had a severe shortage of coordinators or liaisons between engineers and skilled labours. After that, “Eden College of Technology (ECT)” was established on Feb 4, 1960 under the supervision of the Vocational Education Commission, the Ministry of Education (MOE). ECT’s goal was to train technicians, technical lecturers and technologists by accepting students who graduated from secondary schools (Grade 12) only in the field of sciences. These students would continue three more years to earn a diploma degree. ECT was regarded as the first college for producing industrial technicians (Faculty of Engineering KMUTT, 2006).

In 1971, ECT became Eden Thai Institute of Technology (ETIT) by the virtue of the Technology Act. In 1974, the institute was transferred from



the Ministry of Education to the Ministry of University Affairs. After that, ETIT became an autonomous university on March 7, 1998 due to the declaration of the Royal Gazette, Volume 115 (King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi, 2012). ETIT was named to Eden Thai University of Technology (ETUT) and was out of control of the bureaucratic system but still under the supervision of the Government.

➤ **ETUT Vision: CDMES**

ETUT has five visions for the future (Planning Division, 2011b) including;

**1. Committed to the Search for Knowledge**

ETUT aims at:

- Fostering students to become aware of searching for new knowledge by themselves and they can learn new knowledge throughout their lives.
- Supporting academic staff and researchers to search for new knowledge and experiences continuously for academic development.
- Developing executives and supporting staff to work efficiently in order to develop organisation's system to support lifelong learning.

**2. Determined to be at the Forefront of Technology and Research**

ETUT aims at being a leading research and technology university in Thailand. Also, ETUT focuses on using technology wisely in order to maintain environment and sustainability.

**3. Maintaining the Development of Morally Correct and Proficient Graduates**

ETUT intends to develop students to become qualified graduates, both academic and moral background. For academic background, ETUT aims to teach students to have profoundly academic knowledge, systematic thinking, technology skills, Thai skills, and at least one foreign language skills. For moral background, ETUT aims to teach students to adhere to morality and ethics, be responsible, be disciplinary, and be open for new innovation.

#### **4. Endeavouring for Success and Honour in order to be the Pride of Our Community**

ETUT aims at performing its duty as well as they can in order to reimburse to society and the community as they are the main supporters.

#### **5. Striving to Become a World-Class University**

ETUT also aims to upgrade itself into a leading world-class university in the future with qualified graduates, qualified staff, and efficient administration system.

### **6.2 The move towards autonomous model**

Since Thailand faced severe economic crisis in the second half of 1970's due to the oil shocks and the world economic depression. A number of qualified lecturers decided to resign from universities and join industries due to better pays. At that time, ETUT's senior executives who were working on national man power and technology projects had advised national agencies to focus on economic development, manpower development and budget allocation in order to maintain qualified people in the universities. ETUT's senior executives believed that "*A great university begins with a good teacher*", therefore to develop universities, it was necessary to develop academic staff first.

It is more obvious that the ideas of transforming ETUT to become an autonomous university had developed when the first 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education was launched in 1987-1989. This is

because of the fact that two previous Presidents of ETUT were academic affairs committee of the plan. After searching and analysing the efficiency of higher education system in Thailand from academic data, they both realised that the efficiency of public higher education system had still been poor when comparing with worldwide universities. Thus, they both agreed that the civil service system could not enhance ETUT to become a leading university (Kirtikara, 2005).

*There were researches about bureaucracy that cannot enhance academic excellence for more than 20 years. (The Director of Human Resources Development Division in translation)*

The prominent point of ETUT is the positive ideas of becoming autonomous of top executives. When the main ideas moved in the same direction, the policies and action plans were created and implemented to support the main ideas coherently. ETUT attempted three times it could become autonomous.

First attempt was in 1992 but failed due to protests of those who disagreed with the idea.

*In 1992, sixteen public universities' transformation to autonomous universities would have been submitted as one of agendas to the Cabinet, but it was protested by a lot of people before the meeting. As a result, we could not become an autonomous university at that time. (The Director of Human Resources Development Division in translation)*

After the failure of encouraging sixteen public universities to become autonomous universities, ETUT realised that transforming all public universities to autonomous universities had a little chance to happen. Each university had different conditions of goals and ambitions. Therefore, ETUT decided to go forward on their own. ETUT had continuously prepared itself for becoming autonomous. ETUT learned the administration systems and experiences from both domestic and foreign organisations. At that time, there were only four new born autonomous institutes in Thailand. However, they have been initially established as autonomous universities and their

structures and regulations are easier to be set down. ETUT obtained some concepts from Kingston University of Technology (KUT) and National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA) as a prototype. ETUT was supported by the previous President of KUT, and the previous Director of NSTDA.

Besides domestic organisations, ETUT also learned from foreign universities such as Michigan State University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). ETUT has had a great relationship with MIT through the previous President of ETUT and MIT alumni who have the same desire to have a good university. MIT is a good prototype as it is a world-class leading institute in science and technology and has the same size as ETUT's. Even though an old management team was replaced by a new team, the continuity based on the main ideas still carried on (Kirtikara, 2005).

*The President of ETUT at that time was not disheartened. Instead, he was a leader to push ETUT harder to become an autonomous university. He built a number of collaborative teams to study a variety of issues to support drafting The University Act and a set of regulations for three main departments including academic, personnel, and financial departments. (The Director of Human Resources Development Division in translation)*

Second attempt, the main concept of ETUT's University Act had been finished and submitted to the Ministry of University Affairs and the cabinet on April 18, 1995. Unfortunately, the University Act could not be considered as a result of the dissolution of the parliament on September 27, 1996.

The second failure could not make ETUT dispirited, instead the structure and regulations were reviewed. ETUT submitted the University Act again in 1997. Eventually, in the third attempt, the University Act was announced in the Royal Thai Government Gazette on March 6, 1998. ETUT has officially become an autonomous university on March 7, 1998.

It took ETUT almost twenty years to achieve the desire of becoming autonomous. ETUT experienced less internal resistance. The President of ETUT took a role as a father of big family or 'paternalism' by using negotiating techniques to encourage everyone to understand the benefits of autonomy.

*We have to accept that a leader has an important role during transformation time. Our President could assure us that autonomy can enhance the university even though we did not know if it would be better in the future. ETUT people greatly trust in our executives' decision and we believe that this change can bring many benefits to our organisation. (Vice President for Human Resources in translation)*

Hard work, sacrifice, continual policies and ideas and conformity are greatly significant factors to make people in the university pass transformation period smoothly in spite of no instance of changing public university to autonomous university before.

### **6.3 The university administration**

This section will describe aspects of four key components of the administration of an autonomous university: finance, academic affair, personnel and governance.

#### **6.3.1 Finance**

ETUT has become an autonomous university when Thailand faced economic crisis and higher education's importance was decreased. At that time, ETUT executives had attempted to negotiate with the Prime Minister and the Minister of University Affairs for seventeen months about a policy based on more budget appropriation for personnel expenses. One portion of budget would be allocated to compensate the risk from changing civil servants into contracted employee. Another portion would be allocated for welfare budget and provident fund which were normally provided by the Government. Finally, ETUT obtained more budgets for personnel expenses under the condition of the Government's ability to pay. ETUT realised that it

should survive by changing knowledge into money by building offices to provide several kinds of services to external parties (Kirtikara, 2005).

ETUT still receives budget from the Government but in the form of Block Grant budgeting and it is allocated in terms of main categories instead of items. ETUT normally gains budget based on what the Government focused on each year such as science, technology, research or innovation and each Government has different schemes. ETUT has the following sources of revenue: 1) government allocated budget, 2) central budget, 3) tuition fee, 4) research projects, 5) academic services, 6) other services and 7) others.

When ETUT was under bureaucratic system, it received 80% of budget from the Government and made income only 20%. After transforming, ETUT has still gained budget from the Government but decreased to approximately of 40%. The major income, next to budget from the Government, is from tuition fee – 35%, followed by academic services – 10-14%, then from research projects – 6-8% and other services – 6-9%. This means that ETUT can make its own income about 60% every year, regardless of central budget which is the remainder from last year (see appendix C2).

“Performance Based Budgeting System: PBBS” has been used since 1999. This system tries to get rid of the drawbacks of Line Item budgeting because PBBS has indicators to measure outcomes of operations and has flexibility which corresponds with changing situations. Also, this system emphasises more on executives’ responsibilities than controlling expenses. These advantages of PBBS system assure ETUT that outcomes of operations correspond with policies and goals of the Government, while inputs can be checked easily and correctly as well. These make ETUT creates activities or projects in line with those outcomes. Also, top executives who are responsible for finance and strategic plans have taken a part in planning strategies to set output, outcome, and budget every year.

*When we receive money, we have to consider which direction we head to; producing quality graduates or conducting researches? Then we allocate money based on our scheme. For example, the former Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva's Government emphasised on producing scientists, and then ETUT aimed at producing scientists in order to be in line with this scheme. (Planning and budget analyst in translation)*

For budget management. ETUT prepares its annual income and expenditure budget in accordance with the university's plan. If the University Council approves, the budget can be activated for that particular year. ETUT has its own finance and assets regulations. The university's internal audit unit is responsible for auditing budget management, performance and administration every year. Then it has to report directly the University Council.

### **6.3.2 Academic affairs**

#### **6.3.2.1 Courses**

ETUT can open or close the courses by submitting to the University Council and informing the Office of the Higher Education Commission. However, these courses are adjusted as the society's demand and necessity. To open course, it does not mean that the university can open any fields of study to gain more income, but it depends on the value of that course that university can realise its importance to society (Kirtikara, 2004). During 2006 – 2012, fourteen new fields of study were open for undergraduate degree and sixteen new fields of study were open for postgraduate degree. At the same time, there were seven fields of study closed for undergraduate degree and four fields of study were closed for postgraduate degree. In 2012, ETUT has total forty-eight academic programmes and 149 fields of study opening for both undergraduate and postgraduate students (see appendix C3).

#### *6.3.2.2 Tuition fees*

Some students and their parents are worried that autonomous university's tuition fees will increase. However, an increase of tuition fees was not much changed. To increase tuition fees must depend on global inflation, cost of living, and market. ETUT normally considers adjusting tuition fees every two year and the fees must not greatly affect students. A number of scholarships are prepared for poor students who cannot afford. Students who have an outstanding ability can apply for academic scholarships and the appointed committee will select the qualified students to receive those scholarships, while other students who have financial problem can apply for education and the Fund for Student Loan under the control of Government is responsible for approving their applications.

#### *6.3.2.3 Admission*

ETUT normally recruits students through the admission system from Ministry of Education and the direct admission which ETUT can select students directly. ETUT concerns that this will make a competition among higher educations. Therefore, ETUT has used active recruitment strategies to attract students from all parts of the country. In order to gain outstanding qualified students, ETUT has created a number of recruitment projects to grab targeted students, for example, Junior ETUT Membership, Tour ETUT, Active Recruitment, and 2B-ETUT. These projects access to all areas in Thailand all year round. In 2012, ETUT gained 729 students from the admission system and 2,482 students from the direct admission (Planning Division, 2013b).

#### *6.3.2.4 Learning process*

To produce quality graduates for global society, improvement of teaching and learning skills is an important factor. In the past, lecturers and students were familiar with teacher-centred learning which was not responsive to today's world. In addition, the Government has focused on creating society of life-long learning. As a result, ETUT was the first university establishing Learning Institute (LI) in 2001 in order to develop potentials of staff and students in learning (Planning Division, 2012e).



This institute is responsible for providing trainings to lecturers, students, and university staff to understand new learning innovation and improve skills of learning, thinking and creation. The teaching styles used in classes include project-based and problem-based learning by giving students a project to think and a problem to solve. Lecturers will be changed the role from lecturers into facilitators. To enhance life-long learning, ETUT has created learning space in order to urge students to learn every time and everywhere. Multi-disciplinary programmes have been initiated to respond to the society's demands.

#### *6.3.2.5 Research*

With the goal of becoming a research university, one of ETUT's fundamental concept is to conduct research and provide academic services as if a just-in-time knowledge provider. ETUT provides budget to recruit more researchers, purchase research equipment, establish research fund, and hire visiting professors from overseas. During 2003-2012, ETUT had recruited eighty-two new researchers. To do this, ETUT needed to (1) replace the retired staff (3 years before retirement), (2) find new staff to join in research and service cluster in order to increase more university income, and (3) find new staff for new projects. One office was established to be responsible for maintaining all research machines. Also, research fund was established for strengthening research continuously with the budget of 200 million baht. Moreover, ETUT provides budget about 3,000,000 baht per year for hiring visiting professors from overseas in order to enhance and develop education and research in international level. Besides gaining new knowledge, ETUT can build new networks and academic alliance via those visiting professors which help creating an international atmosphere (Planning Division, 2013a).

For conducting research in accordance with the National Research Policy and Strategies, ETUT has created five multi-disciplinary clusters. These clusters do not only work within their own cluster but also work with other clusters. In order to support cross-function working, system of Joint Appointment is created in order to allow all staff to work across departments or faculties.

#### 6.3.2.6 Academic rewards

To receive a good ranking in the world-class university or become 1<sup>st</sup> rank of Asian university, ETUT plans to develop knowledge both in academic and research areas in order to enhance its abilities to compete with other universities both in domestic and foreign countries (Planning Division, 2006).

These are ETUT's academic rewards after a change in 1998:

- ETUT was ranked to 33<sup>rd</sup> of research and technology universities in Asia by Asia Week in 1999-2000.
- ETUT gained the reward of good research and excellent education in 2005 by Office of the Higher Education Commission. This ranking was for assessing potentials of Thai higher education.
- ETUT was ranked to 982<sup>nd</sup> of the universities in the world and 22<sup>nd</sup> of universities in Asia by Webometrics in 2005
- ETUT had an excellent score in technology group by The Thailand Research Fund in 2010.
- ETUT was ranked to 4<sup>th</sup> of research organisations (physical science) in Thailand by SCIMAGO Institutions Ranking (SIR World Report 2010: Global Ranking)
- ETUT was 1<sup>st</sup> ranking of the Green universities in Thailand in 2010 and 17<sup>th</sup> of the Green Universities in the world by UI Green Metric Ranking of World University
- ETUT was established as one of 9 research universities in 2010 by the Office of the Higher Education Commission
- ETUT was ranked to 8<sup>th</sup> of universities in Thailand and 933<sup>rd</sup> of universities in the world by Webometrics in 2011.
- ETUT is the only one university in Thailand which is ranked to 389<sup>th</sup> of 400 top universities in the world by Times Higher

Education World Rankings in 2012 as ETUT has the highest numbers of publications and cited articles.

### **6.3.3 Personnel**

ETUT has planned to develop the Personnel management in every stage such as recruitment, skill development, and maintaining staff as a result that qualified personnel will drive university to success (Planning Division, 2006).

#### *6.3.3.1 Recruitment*

ETUT has had an authority to set numbers of position vacancies by itself as needed through a consideration of Personnel Administration Committee and the University Council. This makes the process of recruitment more flexible because bureaucracy system takes long time for a process of submission and a consideration from the Government. Normally position vacancies of civil servant arise from a retirement and a resignation, thus new civil servant can only replace after one resigns or retires. With a new flexible process, all departments/ faculties/ offices have been able to set up job positions by submitting a request to Personnel Administration Committee. If the committee approves this request, Human Resources Development Division is responsible for recruiting new employees. Candidates who pass a written test will be invited for an interview, if pass, then they will be hired to work with the university.

ETUT has planned to expand the university in order to respond the university growth in the future by recruiting more qualified people to work with the university. The university staff can be categorised into three groups: civil servants, university staff and workers.

After ETUT became an autonomous university, the numbers of staff have increased continuously and obviously, and the numbers of workers have steadily rose, while numbers of civil servants have steadily decreased because some of them transferred to be university staff and retired. There was a total of 72 university staff in 1999 and then continuously increased to 1,332 staff in 2012, while civil servants decreased from 821 in 1999 to 155 in 2012. In 2012, there was a total of 2,245 staff including civil servants,

university staff, and workers in ETUT which increased 100 people from year 2011 (see appendix C4).

#### *6.3.3.2 Incentives*

Once becoming an autonomous university, existing civil servants have the rights to make their own decisions if they want to become university staff and join the new personnel system. University staff are basically employed on a contract basis. The existing civil servants, who want to change to become university staff, will be considered by the University Council. ETUT realises that some staff are worried about their status change so ETUT prepared for both legal change and paradigm and work-method change. The one weak point of the old regulations was that compensation depended on period of working. It is often seen that many new PhD lecturers receive lower salaries than many janitors in private organisations (Sirinaovakul, 2007). Therefore, civil servants who decide to become university staff during the first five years after the university transformation would receive a special incentive called ‘the promotion period’. They would get 1.5 times of current salary and receive staff benefits such as various allowances for medical expenses both for themselves and their family, school fees for staff’s children. These allowances have never been offered by any other universities before (Kirtikara, 2004).

Even though higher compensation is the main factor that most staff consider, it is not a key of being autonomy. Instead, to compensate suitably hard-working people is a significant point that ETUT considers in order to enhance efficiency of organisations. ETUT set up a standard of salary, though the amount that staff will receive depends on their work capability and efficiency. The good personnel assessment will show how efficient their work is. Most staff are willing to adapt them to the new system but the minority rather adheres to bureaucracy. ETUT creates “a dual personnel management system” or “a parallel employment” which is a fair assessment for managing two kinds of staff – university staff and civil servants. ETUT concerns this point and tries to make this system reliably and impartially as the fact that both civil servants and university staff work on the same job but with different compensations (Kirtikara, 2002) because the career path of

university staff depends on new structure, while the career path of civil servants still depends on bureaucratic structure.

#### *6.3.3.3 Strategies to develop staff*

ETUT believes that if ETUT has an efficient administration, staff can help to enhance the growth of ETUT. ETUT executives have been trying to create awareness and good organisational culture to produce knowledge for public benefits methods (Kirtikara, 2005).

The training roadmap of ETUT is created for developing staff's potential continuously and systematically in accordance with university vision and main goals in order to make staff grow up in their career. V – Man concept is applied to this roadmap. It is divided into three sections comprising of organisation, people, and function (Planning Division, 2011a). Organisation section emphasises on knowledge and understanding for an effective working and administration. People section focuses on developing themselves and team, and Function section emphasises on knowledge, capability, and skills including computer and English skills. These sections are in line with grouping staff into three groups; High-level employees, Middle-level employees, and Primary-level employees. High-level employees must have knowledge in all three sections equally, but have deeper knowledge in Organisation and People sections than Middle-level employees. Primary-level employees must have a broad knowledge in Function and a little in Organisation and People sections.

ETUT indicates training as one of compulsory conditions to get promoted. Every staff must participate in training in their level as indicated in the training roadmap at least five days per year. Human Resources Development Department is responsible for organising trainings in Organisation and People sections, while faculties/ schools will organise trainings for Function section for their staff. Besides internal trainings, Human Resources Development Department continuously sends staff to participate in trainings organised by external organisations in order to gain new knowledge for their jobs.

ETUT has prepared a mechanism of employee development in order to stimulate consecutive learning for all employees. Besides scholarship funds for continuing studies inside and outside Thailand, ETUT

has attempted to provide a variety of trainings to enhance employees' skills. "University Research – UR" is one of projects for developing employees which has been established since 2004. This project aims to develop learning, thinking, deciding skills based on Six Sigma concept. ETUT has also conducted Knowledge Management (KM) since 2009 in order to enhance knowledge sharing and apply knowledge into work.

The number of staff holding PhD had significantly increased since 1998 from ninety-one people to 545 people in 2012, so more than 400 PhD people have increased during ten years. Moreover, the numbers of staff holding Master and Bachelor degree obviously grew every year. People with a Master degree increased from 273 people in 1998 to 669 people in 2012. Mostly, ETUT lecturers held PhD, most of researchers held Master degrees and most of support staff and some workers held Bachelor degrees. Only a handful workers had education background lower than Bachelor degree. An obvious increase for those with a PhD was from academic scholarships supported by ETUT (see appendix C5).

#### *6.3.3.4 Personal assessment*

Evaluation system is conducted twice a year in April and October focusing on the job success and personal attributes. All employees must explain thoroughly their job descriptions and work performance and give marks to themselves scaling from 1-10. After that, supervisors will give marks to employees through consideration of their performance in quantity, quality, efficiency, worthiness, and usefulness. These forms will be submitted to ETUT executives for giving marks in the last stage. If any employees can get the high marks (9-10), these results will be sent to Personnel Administration Committee in order to get a higher position. ETUT executives believe that this system is challenging for all employees to bring their potentials and skills out for their work because bureaucratic jobs are repetitive and monotonous based on documentary works which cannot urge civil servants to use their real potentials.

*A good assessment system can feedback to the universities and let them know how compatible of their duties and goals. (The Advisor of the President in translation)*

*The question usually asked, is how to protect the assessment from the executives' bias. We have explained that the assessment is based on the facts of job descriptions and the marks will be used for this. All employees will know the results and ask their boss what they are doubting before this assessment will be submitted to the top executives. (The Advisor of the President in translation)*

For academic staff, they are not only evaluated by their chief but are also evaluated by students in order to improve their teaching methods. To persuade students to participate in assessment, grade will not be informed to students if less than 80% of students evaluate. This assessment is important for all lecturers because it will be connected with annual personnel assessment and requesting academic positions. Also, 'joint-appointment system' is created for staff who work two jobs.

#### **6.3.4 Governance**

Autonomous university has become more self-governance so ETUT needs to be reformed to be administered by assembly. Selecting the President of university and University Council Committee is an important duty. ETUT has tried to select the qualified people by considering ideology of those people with their capabilities and experiences. University Council has a duty of governance (see appendix C7), while the President has a duty of management. Both duties must not intervene each other. University Council must realise the importance of administrative principle and liberated self-management. Also, University Council will follow up the results of issued policies which is an important stage. How can University Council know the effectiveness of its regulating? How can University Council know the effectiveness of administration from a management team? It needs to monitor the results and find the ways to improve (Srisa-arn, 2010). Transparency, responsibility, accountability, predictability, and cost-effectiveness of economy are the key principles of ETUT governance.

ETUT's Internal Audit Unit is established to monitor and measure efficiency and effectiveness of operations, worthiness of spending budget, and results of policies and regulations. Internal Audit Unit is an independent unit in both of operations and expressing an opinion. The monitor report will

be directly submitted to Audit Committee of ETUT and will be next submitted to University Council. Audit Committee and University Council will have a meeting with Internal Audit Unit twice a year in order to take the advices from auditors to consult with management team (KMUTT, 2012). This audit helps to reflect how effective and efficient of ETUT are.

ETUT is the first university transforming to autonomous university, transparency is the first thing ETUT executives consider to be as the main theme and this transparency must be shown and revealed to the public. Thus, to illustrate the university accountability and transparency to the public, the University Council committee comprises of more external committee than internal committee which can lead to a balance of power (see appendix C6). It has later become a good example of forming a University Council committee for public universities transforming to autonomous universities.

#### **6.4 The university performance**

ETUT believes that the transformation to become an autonomous university is bound to have an impact on enhancing the university's main missions: 1) producing quality graduates, 2) conducting research, 3) establishing academic services and 4) maintaining arts and culture.

The goal of changed administration system is to increase the university capabilities to achieve these missions as best as possible. For ETUT, the first three duties are emphasised for academic staff because ETUT aims at teaching and conducting research in order to gain new knowledge. The last duty is an important component to complete the first three duties by focusing on social context as well.

##### **6.4.1 Producing quality graduates**

Every year all faculties/ schools of ETUT indicate the expected numbers of new students they plan to admit depending on each faculty/ school's readiness. In 2012, even though, some schools gained lower new students than their expected numbers, the actual numbers of new students are not much different to what they anticipated. In overall, ETUT gained



higher numbers of new students than the anticipated numbers in Bachelor and Doctorate degrees (see appendix C8).

Another main factor that ETUT concerns in order to evaluate production efficiency of ETUT graduate is students' employment. For postgraduates' employment, the numbers of the employed postgraduates were rather high and constant; never less than 79% even though the economic situation deteriorated in 1998. In 2005, it was the year that postgraduates could get jobs most, approximately 93.74%, while postgraduates became jobless most in 1995 (see appendix C9). Some postgraduates decided to continue their studies but were lower than the numbers of undergraduates who decided to continue their studies. Even though the number of employed undergraduates was lower than postgraduates, those students could succeed to get jobs at least 50% during financial crises. Moreover, in 2011, most employers were satisfied with graduates' ethics and morality (Planning Division, 2012d). The figures of employed graduates can reflect the effectiveness of producing graduates to some extent.

ETUT executives have attempted to develop quality of producing graduates continuously. In terms of quality, the graduates must consist of having academic knowledge and social responsibility. The President aims to drive these graduates to become important power to develop the country enduringly. Thus, academic should not be the only emphasis but also volunteer spirit. An example of close co-operation with the society of ETUT was evident during the flood crises in 2011. ETUT staff and students work together with private organisations to aid the flood victims by visiting the flood areas to provide food and water and to facilitate them as much as they can.

#### **6.4.2 Conducting research**

ETUT aims to develop new knowledge and this new knowledge can be applied for three benefits including academic, social and economic benefits. With a total of 866 international journals during 2004-2008 and 40% of PhD academic staff, ETUT has become one of the nine research universities in Thailand. Research and development is regarded as an

important mission to build an academic excellence and finally lead ETUT to become excellence in technology and research. However, the goal of producing research does not aim only at producing huge numbers of publications but social responsibility is the main concern of ETUT as well. The real goal of producing researches is to keep balance of research excellence focusing on research publication and linkage research's benefits to society and economy. This is because these two sides will support each other as new knowledge will be applied in developing society and economy of the country.

To develop university's research, ETUT has gathered a variety of multidisciplinary research clusters for compiling researchers who are proficient in the similar field in the same cluster and this will support to conduct more researches. As ETUT aims to become an academic and research excellence, an important key success indicator of building research strength is research budget. Even though, the Government provide financial support for research activities, sometimes, the amount of budget allocated is not sufficient. ETUT President decides to find external research funds from both public and private organisations in order to maximise the research capability of the university. Apparently, it seems to be successful.

When ETUT was still under bureaucratic system during 1995 - 1997, the research funds never reached 60 million. There was a dramatic drop of the overall research funds to 38.87 million in 1998, which was the first year of becoming an autonomous university of ETUT. Then, the funds had steadily increased since 1999. In 2012, ETUT gained total research funds of 306.5 million which was the highest amount (see appendix 10).

ETUT believes that not only is research funding allocation a key factor of research excellence but also number of publications. ETUT's producing research papers tended to increase every year during 2001-2012, except 2009-2010 that it slightly dropped. The number of international publications was higher than the national ones. In 2008, it was the year that ETUT could produce research papers the most a total of 1,466 papers. In 2012, ETUT had research papers a total of 1,166 papers that increased by three times when comparing with 2001 (see appendix C11). This reflects

that ETUT is consistent with the goal of being research excellence and can successfully stimulate their staff to conduct more research for the university.

#### **6.4.3 Establishing academic services**

Establishing academic services is the third capability that supports the second capability - conducting researches. The three main goals of ETUT's conducting academic services include developing industrial ability, supporting technological innovation in order to reduce technology import, and providing academic services to the community and nearby society.

There was a fluctuation in all activities of the university academic services. Income from academic services slightly decreased in 2009 and significantly increased in 2010 and 2011. Even though, numbers of activities dropped in 2011, the total income increased significantly as of 434.21 million (see appendix C12). It reflects that ETUT was financially successful in academic services as it tended to gain more income from these activities.

ETUT intends to keep improving its capabilities in relation to academic service activities with hope that it will become the main source of income in the future. If it is successful, it is meant that ETUT will less rely on the Government in terms of financial support. Moreover, ETUT aims at providing academic services by establishing an agency that focuses on research and technology transfer for strengthening of Thailand's industry and enhancing entrepreneurs' capacity for competitions (Planning Division, 2006).

#### **6.4.4 Maintaining arts and culture**

Activities for maintaining arts and culture are considered as a part of producing graduates and developing people based on humanisation. ETUT has organised many activities for students and community services and some of these activities do not need much expense for operation such as projects about religions and Thai traditions. These activities usually obtain cooperation and support from the public.

In 2008 to 2011, ETUT has not neglected this mission. ETUT tended to allocate its budget to this mission around five to nine million. In 2010, ETUT allocated 8.91 million to this mission, which was the highest amount of money over the three-year period before steadily fell to 7.28

million in 2011. However, the number of projects considerably decreased since 2009-2011 as of 116, 125 and 119 projects respectively (see appendix C13). Although, the trend of the budget approved for this mission tends to be increased, it is still very minimal when compared with the budget allocated to the other three main missions, which ETUT executives pay more attention on.

### **6.5 Summary of ETUT background**

ETUT is excellent in terms of pushing itself towards an autonomous university. It is the first university that is willing to change by itself. ETUT's executives play a very significant role in stimulating the university changes. The two previous Presidents of ETUT were academic affairs committee of the first 15-Year Long Length Plan for Higher Education. The other former senior executives also worked for the national projects relating to university autonomy in Thailand for a long time. As a result, they have got adequate knowledge on what university autonomy is and how to operate it. In addition, the university also has got a broader connection with the higher education sector, which meant that ETUT might be able to get access to support resources easier than others.

There is a considerably high unity amongst the university executives. Concept, ideas and policies relating to becoming an autonomous university had been carried on over the long journey of ETUT's transition, even though, the executives were changed during that time. Instead of using coercive power with the university staff, the executives used paternalism to patiently explain and educate their staff how autonomy would benefit them and the university. There may be those who disagreed with the transition in the university but the effective conflict management method of ETUT's executives helped ETUT from severe conflicts and protest leading to a smooth change. Once becoming an autonomous university, the university officers had left with choices whether or not they wanted to change their status from civil servants to contract-based staff without coercion. ETUT was aware of this situation since in the early stage of its transition. As a result, the university has set out the dual personnel management system in order to ensure that its staff are fairly treated.

A smoother change and well-prepared during the transitional period lead ETUT to accomplish its proposals of becoming an autonomous university that is able to be academic excellent and financially self-sustained to some extent. Though, the university might experience a little difficulty in terms of work attitudes of some officers. This is quite normal because ETUT used to operate under bureaucracy for such a long time. Therefore, it is not surprising that some officers still have their work attitudes adhered to bureaucratic system and this adhesion may cause some limitations of organisational activities.

However, in overall, it seems that a greater level of autonomy enables ETUT to be more flexible in every facets of administration, which in turn improves the outcomes of the university main missions. ETUT tends to have more students each year after the transformation. The eligibility for adjusting the rate of tuition fees along with the increase in number of students build a significant amount of income for ETUT. Though, the university aims not to put too much burden on students. Rather than keep increasing the tuition fees, the university is trying to build its main income from researches and providing academic services. By 2016, ETUT has a goal of having its income ratio of 1: 1: 1.2 (the Government: tuition fee: service & academic services), which is not too far away to be achieved. In addition, the ratio of its graduates that have been in the labour market and get employed is satisfactory. Being selected to be one of the nine national research universities and being the only university in Thailand ranked 389<sup>th</sup> of 400 top universities in the world due to having the highest number of publications and cited articles are the reflection of success in research activities of ETUT.

It seems that maintaining arts and culture is the mission that both the Government and ETUT pay less attention to when comparing with the other missions. ETUT's goals are focused on science and technology activities which can be easily get attention from the Government and can bring more income. This mission, therefore, has been overlooked. However, ETUT executives still realise that this mission cannot be abandoned. They are trying to catch up with supporting creative student activities and

community services that can stimulate people to be aware of traditions, religion, arts, and Thai culture.

## **6.6 Lessons learned from ETUT**

This part is divided into three sub-heading including:

1) The influence of institutionalism on ETUT backgrounds: this sub-section is dealing with how the institutional pressures impact ETUT in terms of their establishment and transition if applicable;

2) The institutional complexity and ETUT conceptions: this heading is discussed in the topics around the extent of the contrast logics ETUT has experienced and how they affect ETUT by utilising the four characteristics of organisational filter as a frame. These four characteristics comprise of field position, structure, ownership/governance and identity; and

3) The responses of ETUT to the institutional complexity, which is the discussion around the area of how ETUT responds to such complexity in relation to its internal structure and practices developed and how they affect ETUT's performance to achieve the four main missions.

### **6.6.1 The influence of institutionalism – ETUT transformation**

ETUT is one of the universities influenced by the institutional changes of the field level. The origin of ETUT is entirely different from the other two universities under the study because it has a long history within the Thai higher education context. The university once was a public university, which had been in the Thai higher education sector surrounding by bureaucratic system for almost forty years. However, due to the institutional forces penetrating the sector and pushing public universities to develop autonomous models, ETUT recognised the clear threat to its survival. Consequently, the university proactively decided to reform its status, structure and practices from what it was to respond to such pressures.

The findings suggest that there are three institutional frameworks at play that influence the transformation of institutions in the Thai higher education sector – normative frameworks, cultural-cognitive frameworks and regulatory frameworks. In the case of ETUT, there are two dominant institutional frameworks driving the transformation of the university towards becoming an autonomous body. This does not mean that the regulatory framework has not contributed to the university's transformation. Rather, the regulatory framework legislates for the university's new legal status, mandating and facilitating a smooth quick transformation (Scott, 2008b).

The regulatory framework rather than driving the aspirations, merely facilitate the commission of those aspirations. It is the cultural-cognitive and normative frameworks, which pre-figure and shape the desire to change, and inform the aspirations of the university in doing so. The dominant institutional actors agitating for change in ETUT were the senior executives. This is consistent with their roles as administrators and primary agents of change as stressed by Gumpert and Sporn (1999). These senior executives were in the same collective elite group that were despatched to study overseas during the first wave of Thai higher education reform, and became later instrumental in bringing about the higher education reformation. Their emergent views of university autonomy have been shaped by the influences of mainly Western institutions ever since. They absorbed the norms and values of universities in Western countries and interpreted such norms and values as 'taken for granted' best practice organisational form. Up to this point, it reflects the role of cultural-cognitive system, which shapes the interpretative processes of these executives (Thornton et al., 2005). This is also supported by Hanson (2006)' work which, states that there are certain constraining factors in administrators as individuals adapt their practices, whether consciously or unconsciously as they go about their work.

A further factor is that a number of ETUT executives were also members of the Thai higher education reform leadership group who worked closely with the KUT senior executive body. The leader of this latter body was also instrumental in the development and implementation of higher education strategic plans for the Thai Government. These plans included

resourcing and recruiting manpower to the necessary key roles many of which were fulfilled by the associated ETUT executives. It may be posited that such a development is somewhat characteristic of intra-organisational dynamics as institutionalised practices are either adopted or not (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996). The statement also reflects the role of the normative framework as ETUT became conscientious and further inculcated to the values and norms of the emerging educational paradigm. It is evident that ETUT became willing to transform its status in 1992. Two former Presidents of ETUT had previously held appointments on the Governmental Academic Affairs Committee and in 1987 had been instrumental in formulating the strategic plan for the Thai higher education – the First 15-Year Long Range Plan on Higher Education. This plan was amended in 1990 and KUT was inaugurated as the first autonomous university in Thailand. This shows that ETUT administrators early on acknowledged the institutional forces of the emerging field and saw such change as both imminent and necessary. This is in line with DiMaggio and Powell (1991)' work which, notes that for an organisation to effect decisive change both a need and also a source must first be perceived.

Besides the normative and cultural cognitive frameworks, regulatory framework involving reinforcing the transition in the form of legislative plans and policies also played an indirect role to make a quicker change. The Thai Government developed such regulations based on the suggestions of the ADB and IMF during the economic crisis of 1997 – the Tom Yum Kung crisis (Kirtikara, 2001). These two global financial institutions assisted Thailand in regaining its financial composure with a provision that the Thai Government persists in certain financial conditions. It was necessary in order to meet the criteria for financial assistance in all areas of needs but particularly in relation to Thai higher education. ETUT at that time was the only public university that proactively submitted a Bill to Parliament for seeking autonomous status. Largely due to the pact attained between the Government and the ADB and IMF, the Thai Government then passed the University Act Bill (1998) of ETUT after the twice failures during 1992 to 1997. As a consequence, ETUT successfully became an



autonomous university in 1998, which illustrates the influence of the regulatory framework on the new legal status of ETUT.

While, the institutional elements shape ETUT transformation conception, their mechanisms including normative and mimetic, influence the transition processes and consequent organisational form. The new legal status of ETUT requires the university to adapt their organisational structure and practices in order to achieve a new set of outcomes and thereby become compliant with statute.

In the period 1992-1998 when the Universities Bill was eventually passed ETUT was able to prepare itself for that change. The role of ETUT leadership was crucial in the transition process and was instrumental in a paternalistic sense in facilitating understanding among the university staff. Oliver (1991) notes that, those who have been influenced institutionally are able to act in all manner of ways (Scott, 2005). The system of university autonomy has been strongly built up over time through the normative mechanism, which has been transmitted from generation to generation among the executive team (DiMaggio & Powell, 2000; Gumpert & Sporn, 1999). Thus, they shared the same positive ideas of university autonomy and these became congruent over time. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) assert that managers and key staff who have come from the same or associated universities, are most likely to disseminate on a melange of attributes and practices that they have likely brought from their former institutions. These people will have a tendency to approach challenges in much the same way as they have done previously and view issues, structures, regulations and policies as legitimised and normatively sanctioned. They will also likely to deal with decision making according to past procedures (Hanson, 2001).

ETUT also regarded KUT and National Science and Technology Development Agency – NSTDA as a forerunner of Thai autonomous university and as a prototype. As a result, throughout their transformation process they closely followed and incorporated organisational structures and practices from these institutions. In regard to international prototype, ETUT also chose to assimilate a variety of attributes from world-class leading universities, which ETUT perceived they shared similar size,

characteristics and had wide acclaim in the same field, particularly, in the United State, United Kingdom and Australia. This is consistent with what Fligstein (1993) and Greenwood and Hinings (1996) point out that organisations which incorporate new or mutated forms coupled with equity or better in the marketplace, particularly emerging markets would create pressure on their competitors to conform to the same form in order to remain competitive. It can be said that organisations closely follow the progress of other organisations and the practices that are seen to be effective are copied and internalised within the organisation (Gumport & Sporn, 1999).

In conclusion, the changes that occurred in ETUT are a result of institutional forces impacting on the emerging field – the higher education sector. ETUT early on perceives the potential effects of such pressures and see the necessity to change towards an autonomous model in order to respond to the external environment. Moreover, in an emerging field such as the Thai higher education sector where instability is endemic, organisational change occurs largely due to lead players or constituents closely copying their peers throughout similar organisations (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). The preparation time and policy congruence during the six years period reduce the gap between the university and emerging context. As a result, the changes become evolutionary rather than revolutionary (Hanson, 2006) and are therefore an organic and smooth change for ETUT.

#### **6.6.2. Institutional complexity and ETUT**

As discussed earlier in the previous chapters, competing logics are believed to be around and to create tensions in the Thai higher education sector. Such tensions are bound to have an effect on the complexity level universities experience, which in turn will have an effect on how they respond to such complexity. The complexity level will vary from university to university depending on its organisational filters (Greenwood et al., 2011). Thus, in order to examine how the institutional logics of ETUT are formed, the degree of complexity ETUT experiences and how ETUT responds to that complexity, those organisational filters will need to be taken into account (Bromley & Powell, 2012).

ETUT was established in 1960 and was operated in the former mature field under bureaucratic system for almost thirty-eight years where it was completely supported by the Government before transforming to an autonomous university in 1998. ETUT was also the first college initiating for producing industrial technicians for the country due to the skilled labours shortage at that time. With long history and reputation, ETUT was considered as a central organisation in Thai higher education sector. Institutionalists claiming the characteristics of central organisations located in mature fields in accordance with their status, size, age and visibility (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001). Even though ETUT was the first university that voluntarily transferred to become an autonomous university, its status, age, size and visibility are obvious. The advantage of central organisation is to have more power to negotiate with external demands. On the other hand, it is also easily captured by media attention (King & Soule, 2007). When the mature field was instable due to the deinstitutionalisation and became an emerging field, the status change of ETUT attracted media attention and the other public universities. In addition, due to its age and status, the level of connectedness to other organisations and stakeholders whose behaviours prescribed by the influences of institutionalisation is high and tied (Phillips & Zuckerman, 2001). Therefore, it is likely that ETUT would experience a greater level of institutional complexity, which will constrain the ability of the university to respond to such complexity (Greenwood et al., 2011). It is also likely that ETUT will have a lower ability to freely create its own discretion. When ETUT decided to become an autonomous university, ETUT had a bargaining power with the Government to gain financial support for personnel management during the early transition period. However, at the same time, external observers and media kept eyes on ETUT's direction to be self-sustained. If ETUT's decisions affect people, it tends to receive more negative criticisms than new and small universities (Ahmadjian & Robinson, 2001).

The decision process of ETUT is largely influenced by the University Council and senior executives. The findings suggest a reflection of power balance between the executive team and University Council in the university management. These two bodies support each other. The University Council

is the highest decision-making body who is responsible for examining performances of the executive team, making final decisions in relation to strategic planning, setting policies, regulations and other important subjects related to the university policies. On the other hand, the main responsibilities of the executive team are more relevant to management practices.

ETUT has an advantage of a relatively strong leadership. Ideas of the senior executives have been passed over from generation to generation by prioritising and interpreting the norms they imported into the university resulting in a sense of policy consistency. A good example is when ETUT decided to become an autonomous university in 1992 but it was not successful, however, the continual ideas were carried on for six years before the successful change in 1998.

After that, the President of ETUT and executive team, which were selected by the University Council, took an important role to administer university under the autonomy system. They had power to direct the university and plan the strategic plans for the university. Due to the fact that some of executives used to work for the higher education reform in the national level, they created the strategic plans for the higher education. Moreover, ETUT has been in the field for over four decades, thus, the level of association between ETUT and the field-level actor – the Government – is very high. Therefore, it is more likely that the executives would prioritise and give voice to the institutional logic that is consistent with the Government demands and that interpretation is rooted into the organisational decisions and strategies (Westphal & Zajac, 2001). Also, the Government has still been the main source of income, which makes ETUT to highly depend on the state. The dependence of ETUT on the state funds reflects the ownership or governance composition of ETUT that actually it is still a state-owned organisation (Edelman, 1992). Thus, it is possible that ETUT would prioritise the state demands over the others (Zald & Lounsbury, 2010). Up to this point, the decision process of ETUT quite clearly shows the influence of institutional pressures on the university discretion when experiencing multiple demands (Greenwood et al., 2011).

In addition, it seems that ETUT is not only pressurised from the multiple external institutional forces – from the field-level – but also the intra-organisation. There are the other two influential groups that have an effect on the decision process of ETUT. These influential groups are the university staff including those who are civil servants and contract-based staff.

Obviously, these two groups have different norms and values. The civil servants who do not want to change their status to the contract-based employment tend to adhere to the logics of the previous management system. In contrast, the contract-based staff are more favourable to the new logic derived from being an autonomous university. Thus, it is essential for the university to take their norms and values into account in the decision process if it wants to gain legitimacy from both parties and to avoid an internal aggressive resistance (Binder, 2007; Oliver, 1991). However, attempting to validate pluralistic demands heighten the level of complexity as it increases numbers of demands for ETUT to respond to. There is a number of scholars claiming that number of institutional demands potentially increases the level of institutional complexity imposed upon organisations (Goodrick & Reay, 2011).

Over the thirty-eight years period in the former field, ETUT as a science and technology university successfully presented itself as one of the nation's top science and technology public universities. Such the high reputation and success show that the identity of ETUT was clearly defined (Battilana & Dorado, 2010). It also demonstrates a well fit and belonging to the institutionalised given social category – its membership of the Thai public university (Gioia, Price, Hamilton, & Thomas, 2010). Nevertheless, when the institutional changes occurred in the higher education sector, it was inevitable for ETUT to be impacted by such changes and the field pressures. As a result, it was necessary for ETUT to adapt itself in response to the environmental changes including its initial identity (Glynn, 2008).

Identity is one of the important filters that come into play when ETUT is challenged by the conflicting logics and is compelled to interpret and respond to the complexity strategically (Glynn, 2008). Moreover, identity has an influence on how ETUT perceives its institutional complexity and

sequentially affects its potential discretion (King et al., 2011). As Kraatz and Block (2008) and Pache and Santos (2010a) assert that only one specified identity can manipulate organisational behaviour when an organisation is confronted by institutional complexity. Therefore, it was necessary for ETUT to develop a more suitable identity and clearly present it to external observers in order to be able to make a claim that the university substantially matched the given institutionalised field standard (King et al., 2011). The challenging part of ETUT relating to its identity is not only the development of a more suitable identity but also reinforcing the specified identity across the organisation. The lack of fit between institutional identity and the socially prescribed category loads a higher level of the complexity imposed on and restricts possible repertoires of ETUT when facing the complexity (Greenwood et al., 2010; Greenwood et al., 2011).

It is not as simple for ETUT to make a rapidly organisational change due to the strong adhering of its previous history, identity, norms and values, even though ETUT voluntarily changed its status to become an autonomous university (Dacin et al., 2002; Hanson, 2001; Kraatz & Zajac, 1996; Scott, 2005, 2008a). Especially, if the dramatic change is remarkably contrary to the organisation's former institutions, the organisation is more likely to experience illegitimacy (Kraatz & Block, 2008). In other words, ETUT's organisational change is influenced by institutional constraints. Moreover, ETUT was also aware of the public observation including media attention and the eyes of the other public universities. These factors limit range of strategic responses to the complexity of ETUT.

In conclusion, when considering all of the organisational filters, it is obviously seen that ETUT is confronted by a considerably great level of pressures from both field-level and internal competing demands. This is largely due to the adhering of its history and previous institutions and various institutional constituencies (Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014; Kostova & Zaheer, 1999; Meyer et al., 1987). In order for ETUT to gain legitimacy from those institutional constituencies, it needs to validate each of those prescribed logics, at least, partially (Oliver, 1991; Pache, 2012). To do so, there are numerous factors that need to be taken into account and one of

them is to initiate a complementary identity in response to the pluralistic demands (Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014).

### **6.6.3 The response of ETUT to institutional complexity**

The preceding section has presented the degree of institutional complexity ETUT has experienced. This section mainly focuses on how ETUT exercises its structure and practices in response to such complication. Further discussions also include how the adopted structure and practices contribute to the achievement of the four main missions set by the Government.

The data collected indicates that ETUT reacted to the contradictorily diverse demands by firstly, endeavouring to balance the various expectations of its institutional constituencies and forging linked them into its organisational identity. Balance is one of compromise tactics in which an organisation enacts to achieve parity among multiple institutional actors and internal interests (Oliver, 1991). ETUT then strengthens the opted identity and shares it across the organisation. Subsequently, the university adapted its internal structure and practices in accordance with the intact identity.

ETUT realised its strength as a reputable science and technology university and had a strongly positive sense of this organisational identity. Thus, when the university was forced by the institutional pressures and performed changes, it did not attempt to entirely delete its initial identity or blindly conform to the pressures. Rather it preserved the core of initial identity and made use of its distinctive strength to augment opportunities. Dutton and his/her associates' work can be an affirmation to support the claim. They assert that an organisation with the strength and positive perception of organisational identity tends to confidently respond to and prioritise institutional pressures and multiple demands that are in consistence with its identity (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). An alternative interpretation could be that ETUT's executives are very cautious about the influences of the previous norms and values adhering the university members and constituencies. Even though, the university leaders favour the new institutional logic over the former one, a

complete change may lead to aggressive resistance. This will raise a chance of losing legitimacy, endorsement and reputation, which in turn will impact the organisational survival (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999; Ruef & Scott, 1998; Suchman, 1995). If this is a case, the disadvantages would outweigh the advantages. Consequently, ETUT has to develop and signal an organisational identity that reflects the constituencies' interests as possible (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Kraatz & Block, 2008; Oliver, 1991; Pache, 2012).

Furthermore, ETUT discovered that the national resources for Thai higher education have become increasingly insufficient, particularly, from the state. This in short supply inexorable drove the Thai higher education into a highly competitive environment. Therefore, it needed to construct advantages over the other universities in order to attract more students and alternative sources of funds. The wide acclaim as a technologically expert university was not enough to differentiate itself from other technology universities and to guarantee a good fit into the emerging field, where the commercial logic is also a concern. Therefore, ETUT added value to the initial identity by positioning itself as a technology and research university. This means that science and technology are not only ETUT's area of expertise but also research in the field of science and technology, in particular. This strategic repertoire of ETUT is in line with what D'ahunno et al. (2000) found out in their work that resources scarcity can make organisations to walk away from the *iron cage* of institutional templates. The intensive value added helped to strengthen the university's organisational identity. Becoming a technology and research university supported ETUT to have a better position in the commercial logic side because the university could earn money from producing technology and research. Also, ETUT could get a significant amount of extra funds for research purposes from the Government, which helped the university to respond to the social logic by reducing negative criticism related to a rise in tuition fee.

To distribute the specified identity across the organisation, rather than using coercive method, the executives spent times to nurture their staff positive perception of university autonomy by utilising a technique of



paternalism during the six years of preparation period prior to the transition. The paternalism technique contributed to a close rapport with the university members and that made it easier to perpetually penetrate positive perspective of the opted identity to the members. As a result, ETUT experienced a very low level of resistance during the transition era and the new identity tended to be deeply shared across the university. This illustrates the essential role of ETUT's leaders as institutional entrepreneurs to initiate the institutional change in the organisation (Battilana, Leca, & Boxenbaum, 2009).

The advancement of ETUT's identity development shows a good balance of commercial and social logic. Once the organisational identity is clearly defined, it is simpler for ETUT to engage its structure and activities in accordance with the determined identity (Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014). ETUT then, abided by its identity and exploited the benefits of being an autonomous university, which had more flexibility in management the core functions of the university including governance, financial, academic and personnel regimes in order to deal with the institutional complexity. These core functions are interplay and have a significant contribution to achievement of the four main missions.

In terms of the core functions management practices, under the organisational structure of ETUT, the university council is the highest powerful governance body controlling the overall administrations including following up the operations of executive team, institute missions and issuing regulations. Besides those responsibilities, the council is called to ensure the university's good governance with the underlying basis of accountability and transparency. This is to reduce friction among those, who allege that university autonomy induces corruption and abuse of power by the administration. Therefore, the council is structured to counterbalance the power of internal committees by the external representatives. Nonetheless, at least two out of nine of the external members must have qualifications in science and technology, which is congruent with the university identity. As Kraatz and Block (2008) note that it is important for organisations to

consider if a particular change matches both organisational purposes and external institutions.

Becoming self-sustainable and less dependent on the state funding, indirectly impelled ETUT towards the commercial logic side, as the university has to seek financial support from other sources. With that financially scarce situation, ETUT is still expected to effectively fulfil the social missions. In general, tuition fees are the second largest source of income after the state. Therefore, the easiest approach to raise adequate funds for ETUT would have been increase in the tuition fees. However, doing so would have been burdened with students and parents, which would harm the university legitimacy. In addition, as the pioneer of status change, ETUT is also pressurised and scrutinised by the public interests. As a result, increase in the tuition fees may not be a valid option.

Rather, ETUT deploys its strength of identity as a technology and research university to make more incomes. The university make benefits of the researches conducted in the form of providing academic services to outsiders, especially to the industrial sector. Income from researches and academic services of ETUT currently becomes the third largest after the state funds and tuition fees. However, the university has aimed to increase this revenue to become the first source by 2016, which will effectively signal to the commercial constituencies. At the present, 60% of the total income comes from ETUT's hard work and dedication, while the other 40% comes from the state subsidisation. The ratio of 60:40 is considered as a high level when compared with other autonomous universities, where the ratio is equal 80:20 (Planning Division, 2012c). This illustrates the university's success in terms of financial management and self-sustainability.

Although, ETUT has earned its own income to an extent of becoming self-reliant, as an educational institution, academic enhancement is also significantly important as equal as the standard of qualified graduates and social responsibility. The hard-earned money from the researches and academic services activities is invested on the development of the university infrastructure and academic facilities including hiring highly qualified academic staff. These modern infrastructures and facilities help attract more

students, enhance quality of the graduates and research activities, which in turn, will boost up number of prospective students and reputation. The quality of graduates mission is evident from the annual reports of ETUT showing that at least 70% of the total graduates are employed and the employers' satisfaction rate is relatively high (Planning Division, 2011c).

Regarding the social responsibility, the academic staff and researchers are encouraged to conduct more area-based research. The research papers are expected to be consistent with the way of life in the society to help solving the existing problems. This is to keep balance of research excellence and linkage research's benefits to the society and economy. A numbers of ETUT's research papers have been increasing every year, especially international journals and conference proceedings. In 2012, ETUT was the only one university in Thailand ranked 389th out of 400 top universities in the world by Times Higher Education World Rankings. The success in research activities stresses the positive sense of organisational identity among the university staff even more. As a result, they are willing to do better in the future.

There is the other interesting topic that is worth to discuss here. ETUT actually has no distinctive management system. It is basically just trying to balance its multiple competing expectations as possible. However, the personnel management of ETUT is quite interesting. ETUT responds to the internal conflict of having two types of organisational staff by the deployment of compartmentalising strategy the personnel management practices.

As a matter of fact, that ETUT is a status transformation university from bureaucracy to a more autonomy, there have been two types of staff working for the university including civil servants and contract-based staff. Although, ETUT did not face an aggressive resistance during the transformation, having two types of staff affect internal management, personnel management in particular. The civil servants tend to adhere to the norms and values from old system, and they do not want to adapt themselves to the new system. Rather than using coercive method to force them changing their status to become the contract-based staff, a system of

dual personnel management or 'a parallel employment' is then created for an impartial assessment of these two types of staff in order to reduce suspicions between them. The civil servants are not assessed by their supervisors and can work until retirement. Though, they cannot get promoted to management level unless they change to become the contract-based staff. Whereas, university staff can get promoted to a higher management level, but they must be evaluated by their chiefs and executives twice a year in terms of work performances and personal attributes. The performance evaluation will have an effect on their contract renewal therefore all they need to bring out is their potentials and skills. What reflected here is that ETUT only signal ceremonial commitment to the institutional logic of the civil servants. Actually, the university still maintains its core identity as an autonomous university, where ideal staff should be contract based. This is just to keep the norms and values of the civil servants validated in order to maintain legitimacy to some extent and reduce the tension among them but no intention to preserve such logic (D'Aunno et al., 1991; Dunn & Jones, 2010; Hernes, 2005; Tilcsik, 2010). Up to a certain point, there will be no longer civil servant working in the university.

The robust strategic responses deployed, contribute ETUT to yielding excellent outcomes in relation to the three main social missions comprising of producing quality graduates, producing researches, and providing academic services. It straightforwardly indicates that the repertoire strategies effectively respond to the pluralistic completing demands, at least, at this point in time. Academic affairs, financial and personnel management practices are directly relevant to the successful achievement of the three social missions mentioned above. Though, the maintaining arts and culture mission is left behind.

Maintaining arts and culture mission has got the least attention from ETUT due to the fact that it brings back minimal monetary return. Yet, it cannot be completely omitted because it is one of the compulsory missions and is under the social expectation. Therefore, ETUT signals symbolic commitment to those constituencies that it does support this mission by allocating a small amount of funds for activities relating to arts and culture.

This is just to prevent losing legitimacy from those actors. Up to this point, it is seen that ETUT's normative structure is separated from its operational structures (Bromley & Powell, 2012). As a result, the performance of this mission is just good enough to keep ETUT above the bottom line.

In sum, ETUT could be regarded as a central organisation within the emerging field due to its age and reputation over decades (Greenwood et al., 2011). Being a central organisation is beneficial to the university ability to bargain with the institutional constituencies (Greenwood & Suddaby, 2006). On the other hand, it is disadvantageous to the extent that the university is more likely to be captured by public interests (Ahmadjian & Robinson, 2001). Mutually, due to its history, adhering of the former norms and values, ETUT has experienced a great level of institutional complexity. Facing multiple institutional demands obviously constrains the abilities of ETUT to exercise potential repertoire in response to such complexity (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). However, the superior role of institutional entrepreneurs – ETUT's executives (Battilana et al., 2009) and the strength and positive perception of the new identity (Gioia & Thomas, 1996; Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004) embrace ETUT's confidence in dealing with the multiple demands effectively. The initiatives of balance and compartmentalising strategies have been deployed in the core management functions of ETUT in order to balance and reduce the conflicting demands for almost two decades. These strategic responses contribute ETUT to fulfil the four main missions successfully. Therefore, currently, ETUT is in dominant hierarchy in the field level and has become a role model and influential for other universities to pursue (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991).

## **Chapter 7**

### **Newton Buddhist University (NBU)**

This chapter will present the third case study, which is a Buddhist university in Thailand. The university is renamed here in the study as “Nawton Buddhist University” The chapter consists of six main sections:

- 1) History,
- 2) University inception,
- 3) The effects of university autonomy on the university administration,
- 4) The university performance,
- 5) Summary of the background, and
- 6) Lesson to be learnt from NBU.

#### **7.1 History**

Newton Buddhist University (NBU) is the oldest of two Buddhist universities in Thailand. The history of the university can be traced back for a century. In 1893, His Majesty King Chulalongkorn needed to establish higher education within Bowonniwet Vihara Rajavaravihara Temple, Bangkok in order to create an academy for monks and novices to study Buddhist scriptures. The college was initiated by the Supreme Patriarch, Somdet Phra Maha Samana Chao Krom Phraya Vajiranyanavarorasa who was a brother of His Majesty King Chulalongkorn or King Rama V. In memory of his Royal father – King Mongkut known as King Rama IV, he conferred his Royal father’s name on the college – Newton College. During this period of time, the college was operated under the patronage of King Rama V patronage.

In 1946, the Supreme Patriarch Krom Luang Vajiranawaronsa, President of Newton Buddhist College, approved a new name as “the education council of Newton, Buddhist College” (Mahamakut Buddhist University, 2012). Later, NBU was moved to operate under the supervision

of the Department of Religious Affairs (DRA) – Ministry of Culture. On 16 September 1946, the college introduced programmes for Bachelor degrees. NBU has set three main objectives consisting of (Mahamakut Buddhist University, 2012).

1) being an institution for monks and novices to study Buddhist scriptures including dhamma and Pali language

2) being an institution for virtuous sons to study both national and international science

3) being an institution to instruct Buddhism

After NBU provided three levels of programmes, the Government approved it as the “Newton Buddhist University” on 1 October 1997 holding the status of an autonomous university under the supervision of the Office of the Higher Education Commission, Ministry of Education open for both monks and general people. The university’s objectives have been expanded to be more extensive than the former ones *“to provide education and research, to support and service academic excellence based on Buddhism to monks, novices and laypersons along with cultivating the national arts and culture.”*

Over the first three decades as a Buddhist college, the institution had only one building used for teaching and learning and an office for the university management. Over time the number of monks and novices who came to study in the university increased. This caused an obstruction for the university to achieve its ultimate missions (Mahamakut Buddhist University, 2012). Consequently, in 1973, to minimise the congestion, NBU distributed education from the centre to regions throughout the country resulting in the establishment of seven campuses and one college.

NBU realised that Buddhist knowledge was valued, necessary and important to propagate. Especially when rapid change took place in the world and monks, novices and Buddhists had to have modern knowledge and develop abilities to teach dhamma. As a consequence, NBU decided to offer postgraduate programmes, which were a Master degree and a

Doctoral degree in 1987 and 2005 respectively and in 1999 offered opportunities more widely for laypersons to study in the university. In 2002, after a half-century of physical limitation, NBU received funding from the Government and public organisations to support the university re-location project to a more suitable place. Eventually, in 2009, the university was re-located in Nakhonprathom province.

- *Mission*

As a specialised university – a Buddhist University – the university integrates Buddhism with the four main missions, which are as follows;

1) Produce Buddhist graduates, who have qualifications determined by the university's philosophy and to provide educational opportunities for monks, novices, laypersons and interested people

2) Conduct and develop in-depth research on Buddhism in order to innovate new knowledge that is consistent with the national socio-economic background and diffuse the ideas through modern learning networks

3) Provide principles of Buddhism to people in the society and local community in order for them to apply these principles to their everyday life, which will lead to peacefulness in the society

4) Aggregate and maintain religious and cultural information for people to study and discover the value of Thai wisdom

## **7.2 Autonomous university inception**

It has been a long journey for NBU to become an autonomous university. After the initiation of NBU as a college in 1893, it took half century for NBU to develop as a university and even longer to be integrated into the public university system. NBU experienced financial and resources difficulties when it was under the supervision of the Department of Religious Affairs (DRA) – Ministry of Culture. Moreover, failure to be accredited for the university certificates, the university's graduates were not accepted for employment in the labour market or to continue their study in other



universities. NBU had different teaching and learning processes due to the different knowledge background in higher education of their potential students, who mainly are monks. In the past, many of the students were ordained after finishing grade four in primary school and faced no academic or literacy requirements to become monks and novices. Therefore, the university had to establish foundation courses for those who were not ready for academic study. The foundation courses took approximately three years to complete before students could start their Bachelor degree, which took another four years to complete. This means that to graduate with a Bachelor degree monks might have to spend at least seven years, while students at other universities would take only three to four years.

In addition, as a Buddhist university, the curricula were focused only on Buddhism, whilst other universities focused more on modern knowledge and skills such as technological innovation or management. As a result, both public and private organisations did not recognise the qualification of the degree. Graduates faced difficulties in continuing further study or being employed in the event they left the monkhood. These circumstances led to strong calls for becoming one of the public universities.

At the beginning, the Chapter of Buddhist Monks submitted requests to the Thai Cabinet for the endorsement of certificates awarded by the university as well as the theology level nine to be equivalent to a Bachelor degree in the higher education system. The theology level nine is the highest degree of Buddhist study. Unfortunately, the request failed due to political instability in the country and it was not until 1984 that the cabinet approved the requests.

Thereafter, the Chapter of Buddhist Monks realised the importance of being integrated into the higher education sector. They believed that being supervised by OHEC and MOE could lead to access to more funds and resources and an improvement in the university's education standards.

*"We thought that it would be better for us to be supervised and controlled in our education standards by OHEC and MOE because it could help us improve our quality." (The President of NBU in translation)*

The university then drafted the university's act and submitted it to the cabinet with the expectation that it would be formalised to become one of the public universities. The bill was legislated but instead of being under the supervision of OHEC and MOE, NBU was put under the supervision of the Department of Religion Affairs (DRA) – Ministry of Culture.

The circumstances were problematic for NBU because DRA was not an educational body and was not familiar with educational issues. All they did was to allocate some funds as requested to NBU, which was inadequate to address the educational missions. Later, NBU tried another approach but also failed. Instead of being moved to be under MOE, NBU was shifted to be in the service of the National Office of Buddhism, leading to another attempt to be placed under an appropriate body.

*“Being a university, which is subordinated to the Ministry of Education, can set up much more annual budget than depending on the Department of Religious Affairs” (The President of NBU in translation)*

Ultimately, in 1997, after many attempts, the request was successful. However, as a consequence of the First 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education (1990-2004) stipulating that any new universities to be established must be autonomous. NBU has become an autonomous university rather than a public university. NBU experienced no resistance to moving toward the autonomous model. The university staff and students willingly strove to adopt such a change and enjoyed its benefits.

*“At that time, we had no resistance from our staff and students. Everyone was extremely happy with the change that occurred because doing this would give us a better life. We were accepted by the society, we would have sustainable funds while, prior to this, we had nothing and it was really tough for us.” (The President of NBU in translation)*

### **7.3 The effects of university autonomy on the university administration**

Prior to becoming an autonomous university, NBU was self-governed with minimal official regulations in term of administration. After

becoming autonomous, several factors have changed and such changes are a significant change for NBU. Even though, NBU had some experiences of autonomy before, it was the autonomy within Buddhist community framework. In other words, NBU has never been part of the old higher education institutional framework. When the university moves to operate autonomously within the state-funded environment, it has to comply with certain regulations set out by OHEC and MOE, which NBU has never been familiar with. The effects of autonomy in the four main functions including financial, academic, personnel management and governance are investigated in this section.

### **7.3.1 Finance**

The processes of a request for annual budget for NBU is similar to other autonomous universities. The internal processes begin with each faculty and campus plans its budget request along with the potential projects and presents this to the planning division. The planning division will then aggregate the plans and manipulate the university's budget planning for the next five years – middle range budget planning – before submitting a proposal to the Bureau of Budget. However, it is not certain that the bureau will approve the amount of money asked for. Instead, it will consider the appropriateness of the plan by assessing the consistency between the university's plan and the national education strategies promulgated by the Government. This might lead to a budget reduction if there is any sign of inconsistency. Therefore, it is essential for the university to prioritise and identify the substance of the university' projects to the bureau.

Once, the budget is approved. It will be allocated to the university in the form of a Block Grant. The planning division is responsible for distributing that budget to the faculties and departments according to the projects they have planned. If the sub-organisations cannot accomplish the projects as expected, then they must return the remaining funds to the university's central budget. NBU believes that doing so can prevent budget misapplication.

The trend of NBU's income from 1999 to 2011 shows that the majority of funds came from the Government, other sources, and tuition fees respectively, which dramatically increased over time (see appendix D2). Funding from the Government has slightly varied between 73-86% of the total budget every year and it was highest in 2011 at 86%. The second important source was other sources which dramatically increased every year, from 12.77 million baht in 2000 to 261.2 million baht in 2011. It is noteworthy that the figure of "other" category shown in 2011 is not clear that there is an increase in this particular category when compared with year 2000 and 2008 as it includes donation and tuition fees, so that the amount was high obviously. Moreover, the aggregate figure of 261.2 for tuition, donations and other in 2011 suggests a significant drop from the 2008 aggregate of 342.31, which probably explains why the Government contribution has risen to 86% of funding. Tuition fees also rose significantly, especially, during the gap from 2000 - 2008. However, adapting to the new model of teaching and learning also questioned the faithfulness of people if it caused some students to leave their monkhood. In effect, the level of donations decreased dramatically. Also, the Buddhist charity withdrew financial support from NBU after it has become an autonomous university.

NBU distributed its budget in accordance with the four main missions set by the Thai Government. In 2011, of the total annual budget of 983.5 million Thai Baht, NBU spent most of the annual budget on producing quality graduates and academic services, which were approximately equivalent to 76% and 22.46% respectively. The rest of the budget was allocated to maintaining arts and culture and conducting research. Interestingly, NBU spent least money on conducting research, which was only about 0.66% of the total budget (see appendix D3).

#### *The difficulties in new financial system*

As an autonomous university, NBU has experienced a number of difficulties with the new model of financial management. First, NBU obtains a more sustainable source of funding from the Government but loses support from others. Changing from the old curriculum to a more modern

one has been met with resistance from those who believe that offering contemporary programmes for monks is improper and will cause the monks to leave their monkhood after graduation. As a result, some are reluctant to donate to NBU leading to a gradual decrease in the amount of donations. The Buddhist charity withdrew financial support from NBU because the primary objective of the charity is patronage of Buddhist organisations throughout the country. As NBU has become an autonomous university, the charity might consider that the university has a sustainable funding source from the Government. The Charity may deem it more appropriate to focus on supporting other Buddhist organisations that have less assured sources of funding.

Second, the staff have experienced frustration with the new financial system as they are not familiar with the new financial regulations, especially the disbursement processes. They have found that such processes are annoying and cause slow because they have to comply with so many instructions.

*“There have been a number of complaints from our staff about the disbursement regulations that they are intricate and annoying”. (The President of NBU in translation)*

In this case, it is likely that the staff may resort to what they used to do before the move because it was easier and there were no official regulations to follow. For example, if a faculty wanted to buy materials or equipment and they were able to pay in advance, they were allowed to purchase the items and then seek reimbursement from the university. The new system requires more paper work leading to an increase in workload for staff and for this reason staff do not respond positively to some functions under the new financial system.

Lastly, NBU has insufficient capabilities to generate income by itself. On average, NBU receives over 75% of its budget from the Government. This means that NBU generates only 25% of its own income. The reason being is that NBU is unable to exploit the university's research and academic services to generate a monetary return. It may seem that the

university has been in a developing stage so that the Government provides more resources to support sustainable growth. However, there is no guarantee that the Government will maintain a certain level of funding in the future. Thus, the limited ability to generate revenue on its own could become a serious threat to university in the future.

### **7.3.2 Academic affairs**

NBU was established originally as an academy for monks and novices to learn Buddhism and Philosophy. However, due to changes in the Thai context over time, the number of monks and novices entering the academy significantly decreased. The decrease in the number of monks and novices directly impacted on the number of NBU's potential students if the university targeted only those wanting to train for the monkhood. As a consequence, NBU has provided opportunities for laypersons to study in the university and has adjusted the curricula by applying Buddhism to other social programmes instead of limiting offerings to pure Buddhist study. Doing this also increased the potential for the university to be competitive with any other universities in terms of the range of programmes of study.

*“If we focus only on monkhood and offer only Buddhist study, I do not think that we can survive.” (The President of NBU in translation)*

#### **7.3.2.1 Academic Programmes**

Presently (2013), NBU offers both undergraduate and postgraduate studies under three programmes. These programmes are offered by four faculties and cover fourteen fields. All of the programmes are open to monks, novices and laypersons both nationally and internationally.

Prior to becoming an autonomous university, NBU did not have to adjust curricula which, could be used as long as the university thought that they were suitable for its context. As a result, a number of qualifications were not recognised as equivalent to those offered by other universities. However, now that NBU has become an autonomous university, it is required to review and remodel academic programmes every five years in order to ensure that all curricula provided to students comply with the

standards set by OHEC. Failure to comply with these standards may lead OHEC to refuse endorsement of the academic programmes.

To date the focus has been on developing new curricula in response to the society's needs and possible scenario. For instance, Thailand affiliated with the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2015 so NBU has planned to offer potential fields of study related to Buddhism and ASEAN languages. The primary objective of AEC is to integrate regional economies with the intention to promote and enhance regional resources and industries across the region, leading to a more flexible movement of human resources, trading and investment. Therefore, NBU believes that the courses being offered will be useful for students in the future.

*“Actually, we do not focus on the labour market much when we think about opening new courses. Probably, most of our curricula, respond more on society's needs than the labour market.” (The President of NBU in translation)*

Out of the fourteen fields of the study, the English and the political science major are the most marketable, more so than the religion and philosophy major, which is supposed to reflect the university's distinctive identity. NBU is trying to promote the religion and philosophy major to its potential students as the religion major is the reflection of the university's strength. Offering a full scholarship is one of the potential strategies that might be used to attract prospective students to study in this field.

#### *7.3.2.2 Admission*

Currently, even though NBU is a Buddhist university, the proportion of students who are laypersons, is greater than those who are monks and novices (80:20). NBU is an open university but at present does not have a comprehensive admission strategy to recruit students. Most of the time the students come to study by word of mouth of the university alumni. Senior administrators are currently working on a number of appropriate plans to attract more students. Establishing new campuses in some other countries is a clear possibility because the second national Buddhist University has succeeded in increasing the number of students when opening new

campuses in the neighbour countries. Despite not having any proactive admission policy, there are a significant number of international students studying in the university.

#### *7.3.2.3 Learning process*

Even though, NBU has improved and adapted its academic affairs over time, the teaching and learning process has not changed much. The lecture – based learning method has been used as the main learning method since NBU was initiated and the possibility of introducing new learning procedures remains unclear. This is largely due to the nature of monkhood, which is not supposed to get involved too much with technological materials such as cell phone or the Internet. Moreover, the university has an insufficient number of highly qualified staff. Senior administrators are convinced that introducing new learning innovations will be an essential factor in developing students' learning capabilities but it might not be able to accomplish this in the near future due to a lack of readiness for such developments.

#### *7.3.2.4 Research*

The emphasis on research for NBU is to be able to utilise the study outcomes to benefit society. The current level of NBU's research is not substantial and the lecturers are not enthusiastic about conducting research. Most of the research has been conducted only for individual academic promotions – academic positions rather than to create new knowledge. The limited provision of funds and other resources for research may lead to academic staff lacking motivation for doing research. In addition, the research outcomes do not contribute revenue to the university but researchers request a significant amount of budget. Apparently, NBU has no suitable way to address such problems yet. The administrators only expect the lecturers to, at least, produce the quantities of research set out by the OHEC.

#### *The difficulties in academic management*

Even though autonomy promotes a certain degree of academic freedom for NBU, there are a number of circumstances challenging the



university and these issues will be presented and discussed in the following paragraphs.

To begin with, modifying the curricula in order to comply with the expectations of being an autonomous university may lead to an erosion of the university's traditional identity. As a Buddhist university, NBU is expected to be a source of Buddhist knowledge. Therefore, Buddhism should be strongly emphasised in the programmes offered to students. However, several factors limit NBU's ability to do so.

Offering only Buddhist study would reduce the competitiveness of the university, which in turn will impact on the university survival if it cannot attract more students. Students tend to choose to study in the field of political science rather than religion due to differences in future expectations.

Moreover, although NBU is eligible to open or close programmes of study, they must meet the standards set by the OHEC, some of which do not fit well with NBU's classification as a specialised university. NBU has been required by OHEC to adjust the degree credit to be in line with other universities. As a result, NBU decreased the credits of Bachelor degree from approximately two hundred points down to about one hundred and thirty points. Especially, the Buddhist study paper was dropped down to thirty credits, which was supposed to be much more than that in order to concentrate on Buddhism. NBU has to comply with such requirements in order to sustain the university's accreditation.

### **7.3.3 Personnel**

#### *7.3.3.1 Recruitment*

NBU has formed a board of personnel management responsible for all human resource management activities. The board has established the recruitment and selection processes and criteria including tests and interview processes in order to ensure a good fit between person and position. The current recruitment strategy, rather than being limited to a focus on monkhood, now pays more attention to developing person specifications which need to be consistent with position descriptions. Doing

so can broaden the university's opportunity to employ people with appropriate skills. The staff of NBU can be classified into two groups: monks and layperson. However, they are under the same status of "Government Officer".

*"Right now, what we are focusing on is the suitability of person identification to the positions that are available. It really does not matter whether they are monks or laypersons because the salary is the same."*  
(The President of NBU in translation)

#### 7.3.3.2 Incentive

Since NBU has become an autonomous university, it has obtained a sustainable source of funding from the Government each fiscal year. This results in an increase in the university capabilities to organise and set up a human resource management system. Under the administration and incentive schemes, NBU has established one system for all university staff. They are under the same salary structure, personnel rules and regulations. However, the benefits and welfare provisions are slightly different for those who are monks due to the nature of monkhood. For example, welfare that is relevant to family categories such as; spouse medical treatment and child education expense are not applicable for the staff who are in their monkhood.

In order to retain staff, the salary structure, welfare and benefits are reviewed regularly in order to ensure the socio-economic appropriateness. The compensation structures are compared with those offered by other universities then adjusted to minimise the differences.

#### 7.3.3.3 Staff Development Strategy

NBU has several approaches to develop its staff in accordance with the nature of the university. The strategies being utilised focus particularly on training through seminar sessions and encouraging academic staff to study for PhDs (e.g. by providing scholarships). Training sessions will be arranged for staff every year in order to enhance their competencies, which will in turn have an effect on their career path. Development for support staff will concentrate on increasing working skills, while for academic staff the emphasis will be on building up teaching and learning capabilities.

NBU also facilitates professional development for academic staff by supporting study leave with funds and scholarships. The study leave policy of NBU has been changed to reflect the university's circumstances and considers factors such as budget limitation, the relevancy of degrees of study and criteria specified by OHEC. Failure to do so may affect the funding received from the Government or otherwise, current programmes that have inadequate a number of doctorally qualified instructors will be terminated by OHEC.

*"We are trying to slightly modify our human resource development system but it might take time. We still have to hire special instructors but at least, we are trying to reduce the numbers. Therefore, we have started with creating a new study leave policy and hopefully, it would be a sustainable resolution". (The President of NBU in translation)*

An appointed committee is responsible for working on the criteria of candidate specifications and making decisions in terms of who are the most suitable candidates. Career paths for staff are not entirely clear and to some extent restricted, especially for those who are laypersons. Some top administrative positions; such as the President, have been confined to those from the monkhood in order to maintain the identity of a Buddhist university.

*"Many positions have been reserved for monks only, especially senior administrative positions. We need to protect our uniqueness also to maintain the university culture as a Buddhist university." (The President of NBU in translation)*

#### *7.3.3.4 Personal Assessment*

NBU evaluates its staff performance every half year. The appraisal approach being used is hierarchical superior evaluation. Supervisors will evaluate their subordinates' performance then pass to their superiors to make comments. The primary objectives of the assessment are to provide job performance feedback for staff and for promotion decisions. NBU has no policy to evaluate staff for dismissal. Thus, the turnover figure is very minimal as most of the permanent staff work with the university until they reach their retirement.

### *The difficulties in the new human resource management system*

It is quite clear that NBU is experiencing difficulties with the new human resources management system. First of all, NBU cannot attract highly qualified people from the external labour market. There are two potential reasons for this: first, low compensation and the restricted internal career paths for those who are laypersons.

Although NBU is trying to reduce the gap between its level of compensation and that of other universities, in general, NBU salaries remain lower than the others. This is due to budget limitations as NBU is less able to generate additional revenue beyond the Government funding. In addition, career paths for lay staff within NBU are somewhat restricted at senior levels, where preference is given to those in the monkhood in order to preserve the university's Buddhist identity.

So far, NBU employs a significant number of guest lecturers, while the permanent academic staff have a very low work load. The performance appraisal system is not sufficiently focused to detect low work performance, which results in little balance between staff workload and compensation.

#### **7.3.4 Governance**

Prior to becoming an autonomous university, NBU had no university council. There was only a holistic board governing the university affairs and utilised a hierarchical structure of control, which the board committee were selected in accordance with the length of ordained time not their capabilities of management.

The new university council structure (see appendix D4) and its functions (see appendix D5) allows the university more freedom, ensures better accountability and transparency and prevents partiality and discrimination in its operations than was experienced with the seniority governance system in the past leading.

##### *7.3.4.1 NBU Distinctive Governance*

For NBU governance involves criteria that are distinct from other universities in that Buddhist doctrine must underpin the basis for

governance and management of the institution. NBU emphasises two prominent components of the good governance, which are accountability and transparency. In addition, the former President established the three determinations of perseverance, encouragement and invention as underlying principles of governance. Perseverance means to persevere the former work initiated by the previous Presidents, which NBU believes that it can ensure work consistency of the university. Encouragement means to encourage the university staff and students to develop their knowledge and skills and invention means to the creation of new knowledge. In applying Buddhist doctrine, NBU adopts the Four Sublime States of Mind as a main principle. They consist of loving-kindness (Metta), compassion (Karuna), sympathetic joy (Mudita) and equanimity (Upekkha).

The main concept of the Four Sublime States of Mind when applied to the university governance and management is to make compromise, be free of bias, and clarify with reasons in the process of resolving problems. NBU is not favour of any form of obstinate actions.

*“We just do not want any conflicts but it does not mean that we are weak.” (The President of NBU in translation)*

#### *The difficulties in university governance*

Although NBU has enjoyed its autonomous status for sixteen years, the university still faces a variety of challenges with regard to its governance and management. The primary concern is that NBU has not been able to take full advantage of being autonomous in developing its operating systems and processes along with continuing difficulties in complying with the assessment criteria set by the Government and the assessment agency.

*“If asked how well we utilise the concept of university autonomy in our university, I have to answer that sixteen years past; we still cannot properly adopt the concept to the university governance and management system. Practically, we have a number of difficulties in respect of unreadiness of our staff, and not being familiar with considerable rules and regulations.” (The President of NBU in translation)*

On the one hand autonomy promotes more freedom, flexibility, accountability and transparency in the university environment. On the other hand, it brings about a complete change in NBU operating systems from not having strict rules and regulations to a more regulatory environment with administrative constraints on university staff. These rapid changes affect the staff who are not familiar with working under the new management style in which they have to follow a different kind of discipline. The perceived regulatory constraints foster staff resistance to the new administrative requirements.

In the process of becoming an autonomous university, NBU did not create a new set of its own administrative rules and regulations as allowed for in the university act submitted to the cabinet. Instead, NBU mimicked bureaucratic processes considered by some as ineffective mechanisms for an autonomous university. Ultimately, such rules and regulations interfered with the university operations as a whole.

*“At that time, we knew nothing and we were in rush to pass the university act to the cabinets so most of the rules and regulations were drafted as close as the bureaucratic ones.” (The President of NBU in translation)*

The attitudes of top administrators towards governance and management still adheres to the hierarchical regime in which senior monks who are of high priest rank will have more power than the younger monks. They are likely to be appointed as top administrators of the university or distinguished members of the university council even though they do not have sufficient management skills and knowledge. Younger monks or those who are in the lower ranks will acquiesce with orders made by the senior monks because they will not challenge or raise different suggestions as to do so would be labelled as disrespectful. This can be problematic, especially where the senior administrators do not have contemporary and extensive vision. It can retard the university's development and improvement.

Another complication for NBU is that some of the performance indicators identified by the Government and the assessment agency, are

not a good fit with the context of NBU. This has a negative impact on the standard accreditation of the university. Such indicators may include the number of graduates, research conducted, international journal publications and other measures relating to graduate employment. Due to the nature of NBU, which is a specialised Buddhist University, the university has a number of limitations in meeting these performance criteria.

When compared with other universities NBU has only twenty fields of study under the four faculties so the programmes offered are not as comprehensive as many of the competitors. This affects the number of students that can be realistically targeted. Moreover, as a social science based university, the number of researches and other academic projects published will, of course, have to be relatively less than the others. This is because most researches conducted are considered as not practical application in today's world. It leads to difficulties in publishing the researches in international level and in finding research funding from other organisations. In addition, these researches do not enhance the national competitiveness in the Government perspective so the university does not get adequate research funding from the Government.

The employer satisfaction and initial salary indicators are obvious examples in this case. As the graduates include both monks and laypersons, the evaluation will become more complex when applying such indicators to the monks. After graduation monks do not seek employment or salaries but live in temples and practice religious activities so the indicators are not applicable to them. As a result, number of monk graduates will lower the average point of these indicators, which will impact the overall measure of performance.

*“We have a several arguments with the Government and the assessment agency regarding some of the indicators. Thereafter, they have adjusted some of them. However, a few indicators are still difficult for us to examine.” (The President of NBU in translation)*

## **7.4 The University performance**

This section will provide the information of NBU performance based on the four main missions set out by the Government: producing quality graduates, conducting research, delivering academic services to society and maintaining arts and culture.

### **7.4.1 Producing quality graduates**

NBU has a strong focus on producing graduates who achieve academic excellence based on Buddhism. Integrating Buddhism with other sciences programmes, providing scholarship and free accommodation are proved to be an effective strategy to expand the target group of students. The number of students is significantly increased. Also, NBU's graduates are finding it easier to get employed as indicated by increased rates of graduate employment. Although, the more modern curriculum has attracted more students to study at NBU, there has been a cost as NBU's identity as a Buddhist university has been eroded.

### **7.4.2 Conducting research**

NBU has experienced the most difficult with this mission in terms of both quality and quantity. Much of the research that is conducted lacks practical application and is pursued to enhance opportunities for individual promotion to a higher academic position. The difficulty in developing research activity may be due to inadequate levels of funding for research. Presumably, NBU's research projects proposed to the Government in order to obtain funding are not substantial. Consequently, the Government does not supply much funding to support the university's research. The lack of funding to support research not only limits the amount of research that can be done but also undermines the motivation for staff to engage in research activity.

### **7.4.3 Establishing academic services**

The university has several approaches to contribute knowledge to society, especially relating to arts and culture. Research exhibitions, being project consultants and being resource persons for training seminars are examples. Even though, NBU seems to provide a number of academic



service activities for the society, the mission is still regarded as not being adequately accomplished by the assessors due to the small amount of research contributing to society. NBU has never earned income from undertaking such activities, which are more like community advocacy.

#### **7.4.4 Maintaining arts and culture**

Out of the four missions, this is the most distinctive mission for NBU in terms of what has been accomplished. The university focuses on religious activities such as summer novice ordaining, meditation training and Dhamma training for both insiders and outsiders. The university spends less of its central budget but finds more sponsorship towards costs for this mission. This can reflect both the efficiency and effectiveness of the university's activities aimed at fulfilling this mission.

### **7.5. Summary of the background**

In overall, the case illustrates the impact of the operating systems that have developed under the new management regime on how effectively the university has achieved its missions. For most of the missions NBU has met just the minimum requirements as set by the Government. Out of the four missions, only that of maintaining arts and culture is recognised as having been achieved. NBU has experienced a number of major complicated aspects. They consist of the vulnerable situation of NBU before the move, inadequate knowledge of university autonomy during the move, the nature of monks in a Buddhist institution and the lack of experienced administrators.

The underlying rationale driving NBU to pursue the change was the need to survive. NBU suffered financial and resources vulnerability. Being embraced as one of the universities under the Government guarantees more sustainable funding and also enhances social recognition of the university.

NBU's circumstances were complicated when the Government placed the university under the inappropriate bodies. Disarrangement led NBU to have no connection with other universities and educational professionals. NBU missed out on information, knowledge and insight into university autonomy that was distributed through the Thai higher education

sector at that time. In effect, NBU did not fully understand the concept of university autonomy during its transition. Lack of experience with and knowledge about autonomy meant that bureaucratic structures and processes that were not well suited to support an autonomous mode of operation were instituted. Hence, even though, NBU has not experienced resistance among its students and staff during the move, it has not generated the desired level of improvement that the university may have been achieved with structures and processes more suited to autonomous operation.

In addition, the disciplinary restrictions together with the Buddhist mind set may inhibit the development of more commercial operational systems and management. A particular limitation is that the top administrators are mostly monks who in their nature of monkhood tend to have more limited experience of management knowledge and skills. They also tend to have less involved with political, economic and social development, which aggravate the problems even further.

Another important consideration is that the Buddhist identity of NBU has been gradually eroded due to applying universal mechanisms for monitoring standards of the university. The nature of NBU is distinctive, such universal mechanisms, which may work with other autonomous universities, may not be such a good fit when used with NBU.

## **7.6 Lesson learned from NBU**

This part is divided into three sub-heading including:

1) The influence of institutionalism on NBU's backgrounds: this sub-section is dealing with how the institutional pressures impact the universities in terms of their establishment and transition if applicable;

2) The institutional complexity and NBU conceptions: this heading is discussed in the topics around the extent of the contrast logics NBU has experienced and how they affect NBU by utilising the four characteristics of organisational filter as a

frame. These four characteristics comprise of field position, structure, ownership/governance and identity; and

3) The responses of NBU to the institutional complexity, which is the discussion around the area of how NBU responds to such complexity in relation to its internal structure and practices developed and how they affect NBU's performance to achieve the four main missions.

#### **7.6.1 The influence of institutionalism – the move to become an autonomous university**

The history of NBU can be traced back over a century and the organisational characteristics are also distinctive. NBU was initially established as the first college of Buddhist studies and eventually, has become the first Buddhist University in Thailand. Before the move to become an autonomous university, NBU had no history or any background relating to the higher education sector, or to make it simpler, NBU had never been in the Thai higher education system. It also had never operated under the bureaucratic system like any other government agencies or universities, even though it once was under the supervisions of the two government bodies – the Department of Religious Affairs (DRA) and the National Office of Buddhism (NOB). The university was run under the Buddhist folkways and was confronted by the influence of institutionalism. NBU experienced extremely difficult time and a number of major obstacles before it has successfully located itself into the higher education sector. These topics will be discussing in the following paragraphs.

The findings suggest that the status change of NBU from what it was towards an autonomous university was unconscious. In other words, the university had no deliberate intention to become an autonomous institution. NBU had been isolated for a long time until it had reached the saturation point to the extent that its survival was in jeopardy. The primary objectives of the calls to be integrated into the higher education sector were to seek sustainably financial support from the state and social acceptance and endorsement from the society. A number of institutionalists assert that

legitimacy is as important as materials and resources for organisational survival and organisational change is largely due to seeking to improve legitimacy rather than performance (Ashworth et al., 2009; Scott, 2000).

It seems that the most predominant institutional forces directly impacted on the big move of NBU towards the structural isomorphism of the organisational field – the higher education sector – is coercive pressures. However, at the very early stage of the shift, NBU, at that time, as a Buddhist college, experienced a considerably high tension derived from normative and cultural forces. These normative forces enabled NBU to reach the stage of striving to become part of the Thai higher education operating under the supervisions of Office of the Higher Education Commission (OHEC) and Ministry of Education (MOE). In effect, it was involuntarily confronted by the coercive forces of rules and regulations stipulated by the two government bodies. The institutional coalitions of the normative pressures mainly were the professional groups in the higher education sector. According to institutional perspective, professionalism and government agencies are believed to be the most influential sources of institutions (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004; Scott, 2008c). These forces arose when the college's programmes and certificates were not endorsed and accredited by those professional bodies including other universities and state agencies. This was largely due to the contradictory protocol between the college curricular and the normative ones resulting in difficulties of the graduates in continuing further studies at other universities or getting employed.

Consequently, the graduates, prospective students and the Buddhist chapter together, made a strong request for the programme endorsement and certificate accreditation from the Government. The reflection of such circumstances is the impacts of normative and cultural-cognitive frameworks on the college legitimacy. State agents and professionals are claimed by a number of institutionalists that they play a critical role in conferring legitimacy on organisations through the use of their authority to certify or accredit the organisations (DiMaggio, 1983; Ruef & Scott, 1998; Scott, 2008b). For the Thai higher education, norms and values of those professionals are profoundly embedded in the organisational field.

The embeddedness of such norms and values create institutional prescriptions for the constituencies and organisations participating in the organisational field to conform as taken-for-granted behaviour (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). The Buddhist College's programmes and certificates are illegitimate in their cognition because they are not consistent with the cultural support and templates (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999).

In addition to the normative forces, the college also faced physical limitations and resource scarcities including financial support due to a dramatic increase in the number of students. These are the tensions that underlie an attempt at becoming part of the higher education system. The college suffered with these difficulties to the extent that it realised the threats of its survival. As a result, it decided to make a big change by requesting the state for being integrated with the higher education community (D'ainno et al., 2000).

The requests were successfully approved by the cabinet in 1997. However, in effects of the First 15-Year Long Range Plan on Higher Education promulgated since 1990, the Buddhist College could not get a status of public university. It had to only become an autonomous university. As a result, the Buddhist College has been changed its status to become an autonomous university known as "Newton Buddhist University" (NBU). Once NBU has officially obtained an autonomous university status and located itself into the organisational field, it has to be under the supervisions of OHEC and MOE. It simply means that similar to the other universities under control of the state, NBU has to adapt itself in a variety of ways in accordance with the state rules and regulations, which are authorised by normative framework (Scott, 2008b). Otherwise, its legitimacy would be in peril. Thus, it is quite clearly seen that the status change of NBU is consequences of institutional pressures.

Even though, NBU has fulfilled its wish of locating itself in the higher education sector, life is not a smooth road for NBU. The university has been experiencing a number of challenges in relation to the adaptation, operation and management under the new system as an autonomous university. These challenges result from various reasons.

First of all, NBU has never been in the higher education system before so the level of connectedness between the university and the organisational field is remarkably low. In return, NBU has no knowledge of university autonomy, while the other universities have widely transferred the idea and knowledge to each other through their networks. Lacking of inadequate of such knowledge, leads NBU to become a disadvantaged organisation. Secondly, due to the fact that NBU has unconsciously transformed its status, it was totally unprepared for the consequences of such transformation. Unforgettably, money hunting and social acceptance are the original intentions of NBU to be integrated into the field. Unconsciously changed without thorough preparation may lead the university to experience a severe shock as the changes occurred will be revolutionary rather than evolutionary (Robertson & Seneviratne, 1995). Lastly, most of the university's executives are monks who are in a high ranking. Monks have the standards of conduct based on the teaching of Lord Buddha to follow, which manifested in their attributes and behaviour. Given disciplines are instrumental in deep reverence for peaceful life and suffering no more (Kusalasaya, 2006), which totally contrasted with the ordinary world's way of life that full of competition and making profit. Therefore, it is very likely that they are disadvantageous of management skills. In the situation where the organisation experiences such a high complexity, robust role of leadership is crucial to the organisational survival and effectiveness (Anderson, 2006; Kraatz, 2009)

In sum, the changes that occurred in NBU were a consequence of institutional forces derived from the emerging field – the higher education sector. Due to inadequate knowledge about university autonomy, unpreparedness for the sudden change and the distinctive attributes of the leaders, the gap between the university and emerging field is considerably significant. Consequently, the changes are more likely to be revolutionary rather than evolutionary (Hanson, 2001; Kraatz & Block, 2008).

#### **7.6.2. Institutional complexity and NBU**

In this case, the aspect of institutional complexity will be the key theme to explain the strong tension occurring within the university. NBU has

experienced extremely contrast set of institutions – Buddhist faiths and being a commercial organisation – as an autonomous university. The conception of institutional complexity will definitely provide a good contribution of how NBU responds to such complexities, which will be discussing in the subsequent sub-heading. The competing logics are all around the Thai higher education sector and NBU has located in the sector. Obviously, the tension of such competing logics imposes upon the university. Similarly, to the other two universities under the study, field position, structure, ownership/governance, and identity will be discussed in order to examine how the contrasting institutional logics are formed and experienced within NBU (Greenwood et al., 2011).

To begin with the field position, NBU has completely entered into the emerging field in 1997 after 104 years of its establishment. Prior to 1997, NBU was not visible to the Thai higher education system, even though it has a long history as the first Buddhist institution of the nation. Without previous history with the sector, NBU was a newcomer of the emerging context of the Thai higher education sector. As a result, it had a very low level of connection with the field. Therefore, regarding the field position, NBU are in peripheral position of the field (Kraatz, 1998). In effect, it should have been that NBU experienced a limited degree of tension of the institutional template that has already embedded in the field and less capture of the society, which allowed NBU to be more flexible to create a wider range of discretion to address with the competing logics (Westphal & Zajac, 2001; Zuckerman, 1999).

However, in reality, there are a number of factors causing NBU to be severely confronted by the institutional complexity of the competing logics, which in turn have an effect on the university's capabilities to develop its own repertoire in response to such complexity effectively (Purdy & Gray, 2009; Ruef & Scott, 1998). First of all, the absence of association with the field brought about NBU to become disadvantaged in terms of knowledge relating to university autonomy. Secondly, the attributes of monks, who are the majority of the university's population, do not support management tasks, especially in the given complex situation. Lastly, even though,

Buddhism is the nation's religion and most of Thai people are Buddhist, it is very interesting to know that unlike in an ancient time, Buddhist education is not as popular in Thailand. This is largely due to the core discipline of Buddhism that cannot respond to the market demand of the contemporary society. These obstacles reflect a massive contrast between the university and the field because it is entirely difficult for NBU to comply with the commercial logic without losing the Buddhist faith. Or otherwise, if NBU choose to maintain its faith, it may lose the legitimacy from the commercial constituencies (Dacin et al., 2008).

Next, the structure and ownership/governance aspects of NBU can be discussed together. Similarly, any other autonomous universities, the structure of decision process of NBU is completely influenced by the University Council. It is the highest authority governing the overall affairs of the university including manipulating the President. The University Council in this case, thus, acts as the main carrier of institutions because they are the most powerful group that can make differences, give voice to, refuse and prioritise particular logics depending on their interests (Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Pache & Santos, 2010a).

There are a number of problems mirrored in these two aspects and they intensify the degree of institutional complexity exposed to the university. These problems have the root cause since when NBU submitted its bill to the Government in order to grant an approval to become an autonomous university so that it could operate under the supervision of OHEC and MOE. It was the rush hours of NBU to draft the university Act due to the unpreparedness for the consequences of such changes. As a result, most of the rules and regulations written in the university Act have been substantially mimicked from the bureaucratic regulations without awareness of subsequent effects. Such rules and regulations totally contrasted with the operational concept of university autonomy, which opens a chance for the university to enjoy its greater degree of freedom and to avoid inertia in the organisation. A number of institutional empirical work found that when organisations experience ambiguous circumstances, they tend to mimic other organisations, which they perceive shared meanings



(D'Aunno et al., 1991; DiMaggio, 1983; Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004) and sometimes they do so without their precise calculations (Oliver, 1991). The Act has still been using over a decade. It has been adhered to and embedded in NBU's structure, which makes it more difficult to be changed (DiMaggio & Powell, 2000).

Furthermore, even though, NBU has become an autonomous university, the majority of its executives are senior monks. Those who were in the high priest of ranks before the transformation are most likely to be appointed as top administrators or distinguished members of the university and/or the university council. The large proportion of monk executives has both advantage and disadvantage points. On the one hand, it can strengthen the university identity as a Buddhist university, which will benefit NBU when confronted by the institutional complexity because it will shape the university's interpretation and action (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). On the other hand, the attributes of monks, which are constrained by the Buddhist faith, lead to insufficient management skills especially, in terms of making benefits, which is vital for an autonomous university. The findings also suggest that the remaining distinguished members of the university council who are laypersons, most of them are civil servants or retired civil servants. Therefore, it is not surprising why NBU's Act based heavily on bureaucracy. A high volume of institutional studies have confirmed the influence of the association between actors and their power and interests on organisational changes (DiMaggio, 1983; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Gumpert & Sporn, 1999; Hanson, 2001; Mahoney & Thelen, 2010; Oliver, 1991; Scott, 2005).

Despite having a significantly low level of connectedness with the organisational field due to being a newcomer, any actions of NBU are still compelled by coercive forces of the state. This is mainly due to the fact that the state is the major financial support source of NBU. Together with the additional fact, that the ability of NBU to make its own revenues and benefits is inferior. Such excessive dependency level puts NBU under the coercion to comply with the state demands (DiMaggio, 1983; Zald & Lounsbury, 2010) over the others.

The other potential concern that can heighten the level of institutional complexity of NBU is its intra-organisation factor. In spite of the fact that the university council and the President are the most influential bodies of the decision process, in practice, NBU cannot overlook the influences of its staff on the university administration. Otherwise, this can exaggerate the degree of internal conflict (Glynn, 2000; Greenwood & Hinings, 1996; Heimer, 1999). Alternatively, if NBU approaches to this concern strategically, it can reduce the number of demands, which in turn will weaken the degree of complexity (Greenwood et al., 2011).

There are two types of staff working in NBU including monks/novices and laypersons. Yet the number of monks/novices is greater than the laypersons. Most of them have worked with NBU even since before the transformation in which the university operated under its folkway. There were no strict rules and regulations of how to manage the organisation. In other words, they worked under the system of seniority and they have been truly committed to such system. It is the norm of Buddhists that has been adhered to the Thai society over centuries and eventually has become “taken-for-granted” behaviour of Thais to entirely venerate monks and novices. Amongst monks and novices, they have the system of monks’ ranks to follow. The lower-ranking monks also have to entirely respect those who are in the higher-ranking. This could be the reason to explain why NBU did not experience any kind of resistance during the transformation period. Instead, they were united in their support to make the change.

Nevertheless, after the transformation, the University Act proposed to the cabinet became obligatory. This means that the university’s activities are constrained by the regulatory coercion. Such constraint does affect the university members because they have to work under the rigorous disciplines, which they have never been familiar with before. Some of them even adhere to the preceding folkways and do not want to change leading to the disciplinary resistance amongst the university staff. These complications impact the university internal management and potentially heighten the extent of institutional complexity the university experience,

which in turn have an effect on a range of discretions (Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014; Pratt & Foreman, 2000).

The last organisational factor that should be taken into account to examine the extent to which NBU experiences the institutional complexity is institutional identity (Greenwood et al., 2011). NBU has had its historical roots in the Thai society, since it was the first Buddhist College, for over a century. The Buddhist leisure and special character of monks are distinctive. The distinctiveness over time has been accumulated, deeply shared across, embedded in and eventually become the durable identity of the university (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Dacin et al., 2008; Dacin et al., 2002). Therefore, NBU has a considerably strong sense of the identity. Even though, NBU has already transformed to the new management regime, the strength of its identity constrains the organisational activities and resists change to a large extent (Daprano, 2001; Townley, 1997). This point is helpful to explain why a large number of the university members are adherent to the previous norms and values and find it difficult to adjust themselves or even they do not want to do so. Dutton and his/her associates assert that when organisations confronted by institutional complexity, they tend to align the multiple demands affiliating with their positively perceived identity (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). In accordance with the empirical work, it is possible that the main actors of NBU – the executive team – who mostly are monks regard their initial identity very positively. As a consequence, there is a high tendency that they will retain their commitment to Buddhist faith by persisting in institutional demands related to their priority.

However, it appears that the identity embeddedness has an adverse impact on the university to a certain degree when dealing with the contrasting multiple logics in the field-level. NBU as an organisation is not only required to be responsible for its own faith but also the multiple demands of both internal and external constituencies if it does not want to lose legitimacy in any constituencies' eyes (Dacin et al., 2008). The tensions occur when the traditional identity of NBU cannot collaborate with the competing logics in the field-level (Purdy & Gray, 2009). For instance, NBU may render excellent outcomes relating to the social missions, maintaining

arts and culture in particular because it is directly relevant to the core identity of the university. Buddhism is associated with beliefs and cultural practices enriching Thais' lives in all aspects. These traditional practices are in the form of meritorious activities such as; donation, participating to or engaging with Buddhist ceremonies and/or teachings. Such activities are instrumental in bringing about peaceful society and preserving the collective wisdom of the Thai people. This, at least, can validate the social logic in some extent, which is able to keep the social constituencies satisfied and thus, legitimacy is remained (Dacin et al., 2008). On the contrary, the Buddhist fashion cannot respond very well to the commercial logic, which mainly focuses on profits due to the cultural and religious restrictions. In other words, the commercial logic is absolutely contrary to NBU's identity.

In sum, even though, NBU is a peripheral organisation within the organisational field, it cannot take advantages of being in the peripheral position in terms of capability to engage in a wider range of discretions. This is due to the unconscious transformation and unintended consequences of the change (Kraatz & Block, 2008), unique character of the leaders, who mostly are in their monkhood and the curricula offered, which are not response to the labour market. Considered together, the organisational filter components of NBU including the decision process, ownership and governance and identity and the sheer number of competing logics, it is justified in explaining why NBU is challenged by a drastic degree of institutional complexity (Dutton & Dukerich, 1991; Gioia, Patvardhan, Hamilton, & Corley, 2013; Kodeih & Greenwood, 2014).

### **7.6.3 The response of NBU to the institutional complexity**

Unlike the other two universities under the study, NBU is not only facing the two institutional logics – social and commercial logics – in the field-level but also the Buddhist logic embedded in its initial identity. This means that NBU has more number of institutional logics to respond to. Theoretically, the sheer number of institutional logics gives rise to a higher complexity degree of the university (Greenwood et al., 2011). As discussed earlier, the two logics in the emerging field are mismatched. The Buddhist convention also does not seem to be congruent with the commercial logic.

Given contradictory circumstances will certainly frame the ways NBU adopts its internal structure and practices in order to address the institutional demands (Goodrick & Reay, 2011).

It is evident from the finding that NBU adopts the acquiescence strategy in the form of compliance to address the institutional complexity enforced on the university. Oliver (1991) provides the concept of compliance that it is a strategic response in which organisations *consciously* obey required institutional prescriptions for their own particular benefits. However, the compliance of NBU has leant towards the Government prescriptions over the other institutional constituencies. It is no doubt that NBU is trying to respond to both competing logics in the field level but that is just because both of them are the state's prescriptions. The Government does expect every autonomous university to be able to become less financial dependent. In the meantime, they are also expected to fulfil the social missions and achieve a certain set of standards and outcomes set by the Government. Due to the fact that NBU relies heavily on the state funding and this also is the primary purpose of the university, therefore, NBU has chosen to keep itself legitimated in the Government's eyes by complying with every rule, regulation and requirement of the Government as possible. As several institutionalists emphasise that an organisation's conformity to institutional pressures is remarkably associated with its interests and precise benefits such as; social and resources support, which in turn will enhance organisational stability (Meyer et al., 1987; Oliver, 1991; Trank & Washington, 2009).

Meyer et al. (1987) states that organisational structural compliance is commonly noticed when an organisation responds to institutional pressures by adopting compliance tactic. This empirical work is consonant with the way NBU has adapted its internal structure and practices in response to the complexity. The adoption of compliance tactic is more noticeable in the organisational structure of NBU than the administration due to the constraints of bureaucratic principles underlying in the University Act as mentioned in the preceding discussion.

To make a clearer explanation, once NBU has officially transformed its status from what it once was to become an autonomous university. The university was permeated by the Government regulatory coercion in terms of a broad concept of how the university should design its organisational structure and practices. For example, every autonomous university is required to have University Council to ensure organisational accountability and transparency (Srisa-arn, 2010). The Government also gives a general framework on which areas the universities can enjoy a greater level of autonomy. Interestingly, even though the Government frames the overarching structure and a set of outcomes, it does not specify activities or practices to pursue the given structure and outcomes. This means that NBU had not have much discretionary choices to respond to the detailed structure but to entirely comply in order to avoid legitimate jeopardy (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996). Even if it was a symbolically structural conformity, it was good enough to successfully signal the compliance with the state constituencies (Greenwood et al., 2011). Therefore, the structural change of NBU is clearly seen when compared with the conformity in practices and that catches the attention from the state.

On the other hand, the ambiguity in practices would give NBU a more flexible repertoire of how it would adopt the means that are suitable with the desirable structure (Thornton & Ocasio, 2008). Goodrick and Salancik (1996) and Goodstein (1994) also suggest that when an organisation experiences some kind of means ambiguity; the organisation's interests tends to be the most influential factor in shaping strategically conformity response. Nevertheless, the findings evoke the unfortunate interpretation of NBU in this aspect that the interests of NBU do not seem to be compatible with the prescribed structure. Kraatz and Block (2008) state that *"the pluralistic organization is a unit of multiple institutional systems; its internal functioning reflects the contradictions between the larger systems themselves"* (p. 2). Reasonably explained, NBU's interests are still compelled by the forceful embeddedness of its long history and previous logics contrasting with the logic of university autonomy to some extent (Goodstein, 1994; Oliver, 1991). Furthermore, several studies reveal that competing between logics can be due to the incongruence of goals and

means or the variation in goals/means (Dunn & Jones, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2010b; Purdy & Gray, 2009). The incompatibility of the means and ends has become problematic for the university operation and performance subsequently (Dunn & Jones, 2010). The assumptions are embodied in the university's main functions consisting of governance, financial, personnel and academic affairs.

Organisational interests entail the importance of *agency* (Goodrick & Salancik, 1996), which in this case, means directly to the university's leaders. The association of the two aspects can be explicitly discerned in the university governance whereby the University Council plays a very vital role in controlling the overall administration. As a result, the council is where those leaders can exploit their power and insert their interests, preferred norms and values. In other words, the University Council is one of the sources of institutions. The composition of NBU's Council is dominated excessively by monkhood and bureaucratic ideas as the majority of its members are qualified monks and civil servants. Thus, the governing mechanism is assimilated Buddhist doctrines and bureaucratic principles into the management practices. For instance, NBU applies the Four Sublime States of Mind as a core principle of organisational management. The Four Sublime States of Mind comprises of loving-kindness, compassion, sympathetic joy and equanimity, which are expected to minimise conflicts, increase sympathy for others and lead to a smoother management. Moreover, all university members - both monks and laypersons - are familiar with the philosophy of middle path, which emphasises on self-sufficiency, thus they are not absorbed in making income for their own sakes. The Middle Path is the core doctrine of Buddhism and is religiously applied to most activities of Buddhists. Up to this point, it is very apparent that the interests and distinctiveness of NBU are extremely contradictory to the organisational structure and institutional logics of university autonomy, particularly, the commercial logic.

In addition, NBU faced the drawbacks of bureaucracy, as it is believed to be an old-fashionable and inflexible system, especially, in the university autonomy perspective. Most of the university staff encounter a

problem with acclimation to a more complicatedly systematic of bureaucracy because they used to work in a hierarchical structure of control before NBU has changed its status. They have found that working under the new structure is much more complex than the old structure where there was no rigid rules and regulations, which made their operations a lot easier and more straightforward. They also had been in this working environment over decades so that the norms and values were adhered to them profoundly. Thus, it is understandable why they have suffered working under the new system. Even if the executives realise the excessive regulations need to be more concise in order to enhance the quality of working in all areas, they are not bold enough to make any changes because of inadequate management skills. The university then, has chosen to morally encourage its members to understand the new structure and practices and gradually change their work attitudes. This resolution well presents the nature of monkhood and Buddhist values and culture that are usually gentle and compromised in the university.

As a consequence of these downsides, NBU struggles with management of the other three core functions – personnel, financial and academic – resulting in relatively ineffective performances of the four main social missions. The university management is not the only area challenged by the utmost impact of the institutional complexity but also the Buddhist faith, which is the valuable organisational identity, as a Buddhist university.

Despite that fact that NBU claims itself as a specialised university, the criteria set up by OHEC to evaluate the performance of the four main missions are almost indistinguishable from those that are in the other categories. Even though, the indicators of each criterion are slightly different, they are universal in their nature. Most of them are not even suitable for measuring NBU; the number of international publications for instance. This simply means that NBU is not only benchmarked against the other universities in the same group but also those that have utterly different areas of expertise. Research universities are examples. Due to the highly dependent level of NBU on the Government funding, the university does not have enough power to negotiate with the Government regarding the



incompatible indicators (DiMaggio & Powell, 2000; Greenwood et al., 2011). Failure of the evaluation may put NBU in a financial instability situation, which ultimately will impact the organisational survival (Scott, 2008b). Consequently, NBU has accepted to comply with every rule, regulation and requirements as well as attempted to meet every criterion set up by the Government.

The university then has adopted internal practices as much as possible to pursue the standards, at least, partly and maintain legitimacy from the Government even though it has realised harm to its precious identity. There are a number of scholars noting the difficulties in organisational legitimacy when an organisation is experiencing pluralistic demands because validation of one set of prescriptions may invalidate the others (Glynn, 2000, 2008; Pratt & Foreman, 2000). Other than the organisational structure, the most manifest evidence of the practices based on compliance approach NBU has adopted and that has left unpleasant scars on the university distinctive identity, are related to its academic affair.

In spite of having a greater level of autonomy to manage its own academic affairs, the degree and curricular NBU offers are still controlled by OHEC in some extent. Every degree and curriculum offered will have to be examined whether or not it meets a set of standards and then granted an approval by OHEC before official commencing. This mirrors the coercive forces of the Government on the university's academic functioning through accreditation (Scott et al., 2001). As a result, NBU's executives have complied with what OHEC requires as a result that the university needs to gain legitimacy and financial sustainability (Edelman, 1992; Oliver, 1991; Suchman, 1995). NBU has been reduced the compulsory paper credits of Buddhist studies from 200 credits in the past to 30 credits at present, which is not substantially enough for a Buddhism specialised university to contribute a deep and comprehensive knowledge of Buddhism. Additionally, to conform to commercial logic, NBU has to attract more students to earn more incomes. To do so, its programmes must be in line with the labour market needs. As a result, NBU has attempted to broaden its fields of study and student audience by integrating science into the majority of

programmes rather than purely offering Buddhist studies. Even though NBU has gained more students, at the same time, its faith and identity has been faded away gradually.

As the management of the core functions is bound to have an effect on the achievement of the four main missions. However, due to the given high complexity level imposed on and downsides of NBU, metaphorically said, NBU had jumped out of the frying pan of financially unstable state into the fire of institutionally incompatible state. Out of the four main missions, NBU performs the most outstanding performance in maintaining arts and culture. The university has produced a significant number of religious activities, which are meaningful to the Thai culture and society. The budget used for this mission mainly comes from sponsors in the form of donation project by project. Even though this mission cannot create extra incomes for the university, it does not use up money from the central budget either. The reason behind the excellent outcome would be that the intact identity of NBU is perfectly aligned with this mission as the nature of these two aspects emphasises more on social logic.

Contrastingly, the performance of the other three main missions only meets minimum standards set by the Government. Though, the findings explicitly illustrate that the majority of the Key Performance Indicator outlined by OHEC to measure the performance of NBU relating to the four main missions is unorthodox with the organisational special characteristics. This is consistent with Kraatz and Block (2008)' work noting that pluralism can create difficulty in organisational change when a given change is odd with organisations' unique history and identity. A good example is the indicators related to number of international publications. It could be problematic for NBU to publish a vast number of Buddhist articles internationally as they are not that widely recognised in international level, unlike papers related to science. As a result, NBU has a very minimal number of international publications and therefore, has become the weakest point of NBU. Moreover, the core of Buddhism focuses appreciably on practice. Numbers of papers cannot guarantee understanding the insight knowledge of Buddhism.

Regarding the producing quality graduates and academic services missions, NBU has responded to the demands of the Government by attempting to increase numbers of students and graduates and activities distributed to the local and society. However, even though, NBU has gained more students and that contributes to the university economy, the distinctive identity as a Buddhist university has become pale due to the credit reduction of Buddhist papers. Furthermore, the academic services activities cannot bring in monetary return to the university because people perceive religious activities as meritorious activities, which should not be involved with benefits. Therefore, NBU considers this mission as an unfinished business.

The phenomenon occurring in NBU, reflect drastic impacts of institutional constraints in pluralistic environment on the organisational response and adaptation. The adoption of compliance tactic, in overall, can satisfy the major constituent, which is the state by conforming to its rules, regulations and expectations. Although, NBU has performed just an acceptable performance of the four missions, it is, at this point in time, sufficient for maintaining legitimacy, social acceptance and financial stability. The interesting question is how long NBU can tolerate such complication. The answer would be that otherwise, until one logic actually gives way to the other. But that would mean the Buddhist faith of the university is already eliminated or it could be that NBU might not be able to survive in a long run if it chose to preserve its faith. NBU may not be able to effectively serve the commercial constituencies if ones view the university performance from profit-oriented perspective. Nonetheless, if deliberately considered from the social logic side, NBU may be an effective organisation in its way. The university's activities including researches, academic services and maintaining arts and cultures may not be able to generate monetary return but they are culturally and socially valuable, which their value cannot be calculated. As Kraatz and Block (2008) assert that "*no organization realistically be all things to all people at all times*" (p.20).

NBU case also stresses the importance of the association of organisational origin and embrace of organisational change. There are a number of institutional work conclude that cultural prescriptions embedded

in organisational form since its establishment compel organisational behaviour for the rest of organisations' lives (Haveman & Rao, 1997). This proposition could help to explain why NBU has been experiencing the difficulties in responding to changes it has embraced. Moreover, NBU's transformation is ironic because it has been initiated without calculative consequences in long term (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Such transformation and strategic response NBU has adopted reflects imbalance between the exogenously institutional demands and commitment to its antiquity. Therefore, the given change and "*self*" of NBU is out of alignment leading to excessive compliance. This eventually has an effect on the effectiveness of the university both in terms of management and performance.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Discussion**

The previous chapters have provided descriptive overviews and contexts as to the backgrounds of the Thai higher education sector and the three cases under study. This chapter, therefore, focuses mainly on discussions of the study by using the case studies as examples. The discussion draws on the theoretical framework developed earlier in chapter 3 – literature review chapter. This chapter is divided into five main sections. Section one (sub-heading 8.1) overviews the main features of the framework used in this study. Section two (sub-heading 8.2) provides an in-depth discussion of institutional theory applied to the overall background of Thai higher education reform. The following three sections conduct in-depth discussions and analysis of institutional complexity (sub-heading 8.3), institutional theory and organisational change (sub-heading 8.4) and organisational effectiveness (sub-heading 8.5) of the Thai Higher Education, respectively.

#### **8.1 Framework main features overviews**

This section is the overview of key features of the theories used for analysing this study. There are three main relevant academic literatures including:

1. institutional theory
2. autonomy
3. organisational effectiveness.

These three theoretical positions combine to offer new breadth and depth to current understandings of the emerging context of the Thai higher education sector through the analysis of distinct individual cases. Logically, it is appropriate to begin with the concept of institutional theory. Institutional theory provides an overarching principle for this study to help develop an understanding of the emerging context through the illustration of the three individual cases. Each case is subjected to its respective wider contextual dynamics.

To begin with, institutional theory seeks to explain why societies, organisational fields and/or organisations develop similar structures and practices regardless of proof of efficiency or effectiveness. The theory stresses the influences of social pressures such as; norms, values, regulations, social expectation etc., as the accelerators pushing societies, organisational fields and/or organisations towards homogeneity Dacin et al. (2002); (DiMaggio, 1983; Kraatz & Zajac, 1996; Scott, 2005). In this process “agency”, with its power and interest, plays a significant role in initiating institutional change through normative, coercive and mimetic pressures (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Scott, 2008b). Even though institutions constrain and shape actors’ behaviours, they can also innovate, alter and preserve other institutions. Therefore, they are capable of responding to institutional pressures in various ways. As a result, the processes within institutional creation can be top-down and bottom-up. Also, it needs to be clarified that institutional theory has several levels of analysis including societal-level, organisational field-level and organisational level depending on the researchers’ focus. However, the concept itself provides the same core principle in every level. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, four main aspects of institutional theory are applied to the analysis of the context and the cases.

First, the concept of institutionalisation, which involves the processes of how institutions are created, maintained and diffused. This concept is used to examine the overall perspective of Thai society as an environment of the Thai higher education sector in a variety aspects including:

- 1) how the Thai higher education reform – from a more regulatory model to a more autonomous model – has been initiated resulting in a shift of social expectation of Thai higher education
- 2) how the concept of university autonomy and the ultimate outcomes of Thai higher education, which have become the new values and norms of Thai public universities have permeated into society at large

- 3) how the new set of institutional logics diffuses to the whole higher education sector, where the three universities in this study are leading to in respect of changes in their structures and institutional practices

Second, the concept of institutional processes which, describes the effects of institutional processes on societies, organisational fields and individual organisations within the fields. The notion will help to identify;

- 1) the effect of institutional pressures influencing the Thai society, higher education sector and the three cases under the study
- 2) the sources of such pressures
- 3) what the direction of Thai higher education is moving to

Third, the concept of institutional complexity is useful for understanding the tensions facing multiple sets of institutional logics of the sector. Also, it expands knowledge of why the three universities have experienced different tensions between multiple institutional logics, which ultimately affects the way they respond to such complexity.

Fourth, organisational change under an institutional theory perspective contributes guidelines to understand the nature of changes that have occurred in the Thai higher education sector and the three universities. This includes potential challenges and opportunities that the higher education sector and the universities might experience. In addition, the framework helps to pinpoint why the outcomes of the three universities are so different.

The second and third theories are autonomy and organisational effectiveness. As the Thai higher education has made the profound shift from a regulatory environment to one of more autonomy, the general idea of autonomy and its mechanisms can contribute to a better understanding of the study context. In addition, a greater degree of autonomy is expected to have a positive effect on the universities' effectiveness through achieving the ultimate objectives set by the Government. However, in reality, there might be a certain degree of variation and this might affect the abilities of

the individual universities to achieve those outcomes, which will be discussed further in the following sections.

## **8.2 Institutional and higher education reform in Thailand**

This section is the discussion of the overall picture of Thai higher education reform under institutional perspective. It mainly focuses on the influences of three key elements of institutions and their mechanisms on the reform. Such three key elements consist of regulatory, normative and cultural-cognitive element. The mechanisms of these three elements are coercive, normative and mimetic, respectively. These three elements and their mechanisms are used to develop an understanding of how the Thai higher education has been reformed. What mechanisms have been used to drive the changes. What kind of institutional pressures took place in Thai higher education sector overtime and how the concept of university autonomy has been diffused and permeated into the society and the higher education sector.

It is vital to discuss the overall phenomenon of the emerging context of Thai higher education first as it is the context, within which the three cases operate. Doing so can provide a clear and essential link between the cases and their context to help develop a better understanding of the phenomena under examination.

Institutional theory suggests homogeneity of organisational fields and organisations within the fields. This is because institutional scholars believe that changes may occur during a very early stage of organisational life circle. Given these changes are the results of institutional pressures. The primary purpose of an organisational change is to gain legitimacy from its constituencies and not to improve organisational efficiency or effectiveness. In other words, organisations are forced to change by regulatory and/or normative and/or cultural-cognitive forces. Once the organisational contexts are stabilised, the organisations within the contexts will eventually develop similar characteristics. Education organisations are not different, perhaps, they may be even more sensitive to institutional



pressures as they are involved with a number of stakeholders and having goal ambiguity (Frumkin & Galaskiewicz, 2004; Kraatz & Zajac, 1996).

The data obtained reflects the claims of the theory. Over the last century, Thai higher education has gradually developed a structure similar to that of Western higher education in order to acquire perceived legitimacy. Support for this claim is illustrated through the three main movements of changes brought into the Thai higher education sector. Each movement or stream has its own interesting distinctions in terms of how Thai society and the higher education sector are influenced by institutional pressures. However together they provide an underlying basis for the emerging context of Thai higher education. The first wave took place around the 1920s to early 1960s, which was one of the more profound changes occurring in Thai society and higher education and has become a precursor of the later movements. The second wave of change began during 1960 to 1996, which was more likely to be incremental in its nature. This was in contrast to the third wave, which involved a more radical change commencing in the period of the “Tom Yum Kung” crisis in 1997 until present.

The first movement, which occurred during the modernisation period, where Western countries were dominant over other countries throughout the world both in trading and other activities. They were not only physically powerful but their culture, knowledge and ideas were also influential in the world activities. Many countries opened their door to participate in such activities including Thailand, which was at the time regarded as an underdeveloped country. The culture, knowledge and ideas affected the way of life and thought of Thai people. At this point, the existing institutional structure of Thai society, which was quite conservative in its nature, was challenged by such external institutional pressures through institutional processes. Therefore, the changes occurred in this movement were considerably dramatic. In this movement, regulative and normative systems are highlighted and perhaps they might be a harbinger of cultural-cognitive systems. Fear of being colonised by Western countries through violent takeovers forced Thais to conform to the Western norms and values. The Thai Government at that time decided a lesser form of colonisation by

agreeing to develop the country to become more modernised resulting in the initiation of modernisation values in Thai society. Subsequently, the cultural-cognitive systems played their role by interpreting the new set of institutional logics as taken for granted behaviour by society, and manifesting in the ever accelerating socio-cultural pursuit of a modernisation orientation. Such a claim is broadly underpinned by Scott (2008b)'s statement "*internal interpretative processes are shaped by external cultural frameworks*" (p. 57). This is also in line with a number of empirical works developed within the 'institutional' framework concluding that the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive components are problematic to inform which one is more powerful than the others. More often than not they are intertwined (Macfarlane, Barton-Sweeney, Woodard, & Greenhalgh, 2013).

A number of examples showing such conformities to the given pressures are seen in the establishment of the first Thai university. It has been believed that higher education is a vital tool for progress and success of becoming a modern country. Therefore, the primary purpose of this university was to serve the Thai Government services including developing the national infrastructures. Moreover, the Thai elite was encouraged to learn English and adapt and accept Western culture. They also were dispatched to study overseas in order to be able to communicate more confidently with Western people. During the 1940s until after the World War II, more universities were created in order to boost the modernisation of the country but not to be focused on academic excellence. Even though the Thai society generally adhered to the Western norms and values, most of the universities at that time were public universities and operated under a bureaucratic system (Sangnapaboworn, 2003). Eden University was one of those. Since they were public universities, their major funds came from public funding. Thus, in order to receive sustainable funds, they needed to gain legitimacy from society by serving its expectation of becoming modernised. As a result, Thai higher education is not only constrained by the new institutional logics influenced from the Western countries but also from the resources dependency i.e. public funding.

On the other hand, the second wave was mainly derived from internal factors and normative systems played a significant role. Returning home from overseas the Thai elite has brought about inspiration for higher education reform, particularly, those who have become professionals in the educational area. They were later regarded as the emerging leaders of Thai higher education. Being overseas for many years it is inevitable for them to be influenced by Western norms and values in their perceptions. The experiences gained from Western countries shaped their aspirations to modernise the nation by enhancing national academic standards to meet international levels. Western high prestige universities have been considered as blueprints. The bureaucratic system was then recognised as an unresponsive form of university management and that university autonomy would tend to become more productive.

In addition, the direction of Thai higher education starts showing up quite clearly in this movement. The sector gradually developed a structure similar to that found in Western countries as a result of the influences of institutional mechanisms. Normative and mimetic mechanisms are in particular. These mechanisms are regarded as isomorphic pressures pushing organisations towards homogeneity (DiMaggio, 1983). The Thai elites were influenced by the Western institutions in terms of how universities should be structured, they expanded their ideas through their networks. Such networks are robust and authoritative. It is a matter of fact that a number of those educational professionals, who favoured the concept of university autonomy, worked within the Government agencies as executive administrators. For instance, the founding Rector of KUT, who the public regards as the most prominent leader of Thai higher education reform, used to work for the Thai Government as Minister of Education in 2006. He also established a large number of coalitions working in different universities and organisations. With their power and interest, they have asserted their preferred orientation to the state through those durable networks. Consequently, the first higher education long-range plan (1990 – 2004) was commenced. As a result of the strategic plan, the first newly autonomous university (the first case study - KUT) was established with a primary intention of becoming a role model for other Thai public universities

to adopt the same structure of management. The data mirrors DiMaggio (1983) pointing out that normative pressures operate through professionalisation and its network, which when laid across organisational boundaries can shape institutional forms by creating standards, values and accrediting certifications.

The data also illustrates that mimetic processes do not only happen at the sector level but also at the organisational level. This reflects the claim of Greenwood et al. (2011) who stresses the inherent nature of field-level institutional logics in organisational level. The initiation of the first autonomous university was involved with frequent overseas study trips of the founder rector and his team. This was to observe operational systems of international universities, especially in Western countries. After the establishment of the ideal university, the other two newly autonomous universities were set up in the same fashion as the creators of these universities have had a durable relationship with the founding Rector of KUT. However, in part the nature of the institutions they created was determined by the First Higher Education Long-range Plan (1990-2004), which declared that any university created after the commencing of this plan must be an autonomous university. It is not just these two universities that have been impacted by the coercive power of the plan. The dramatic transformation of NBU to become an autonomous university was also a result of such coercion. Performing a complete change without thorough preparation caused NBU to experience considerable ambiguity and uncertainty (see chapter 7). Therefore, the university copied innovative universities because this the simplest approach in such circumstances. These instances mirror the claim of DiMaggio and his associate who affirmed that imitation can be spread out in various ways including consulting associations or transferring of employees (DiMaggio, 1983). Moreover, they reflect linkage between regulative and normative systems. Scott (1987) states that regulative and normative systems, sometimes work collaboratively because normative systems can authorise or sanction coercive power.

The other illustration of movement towards homogeneity of Thai higher education is demonstrated in the third movement and it is largely due to seeking legitimacy. It was a period in which Thai society and the higher education sector underwent radical changes due to both internal and external pressures. In this movement, normative and coercive forces explicitly play a significant role in driving the sector towards isomorphism and the economic crisis was an accelerator.

Thailand was hit by a severe financial crisis known as “Tom Yum Goong crisis” in 1997. The crisis provoked a strong call for higher education reform from the same group of educational professionals. The reason being was that they believed that Thailand could not actively respond to the crisis due to a lack of capable people. To build people capability, higher education was then considered as a major source. There were also those who believed that modern universities would help to resolve the national critical problems and enhanced the national competitiveness. Therefore, the most suitable organisational structure for the universities should have a greater level of autonomy so that they could operate more independently. Up to this point, it reflects that Thai higher education is challenged once again by normative pressures. The idea of university autonomy has become embedded in Thai society in the last decade and has never faded away. Instead, it transmits over time, generation to generation through networks of educational professionals (Greenwood et al., 2002; Macfarlane et al., 2013; Zucker, 1977). There were a number of public debates in relation to pro sides and con sides of university autonomy throughout the country. Nevertheless, the idea was still pushed forwards. New desirable outcomes and characteristics of proposed autonomous university were then identified. This resulted in a paradigm shift in social expectations, which creates a perspective of how the higher education should operate and what the ultimate outcomes should be.

Not only did normative pressures play significant roles in this movement, but so did coercive pressures. The coincidence of a paradigm shift and relying on financial support from the IMF and the ADB generated normative and coercive pressures to constrain the higher education sector

to adopt the desirable structure and practices (DiMaggio, 1983). In accordance with the ADB suggestion in 1998, the Government then formulated a number of policies and strategic plans to reform the higher education sector and stimulate the transition of public universities to become autonomous units by 2002 (Rungratsamee, 2004) in order to reduce the national budget spent on higher education. Given such difficult circumstances and constraints, ETUT was to step forward and choose to respond to such pressures proactively. This was the first public university to shift towards an autonomous model. The state also promulgated a new set of expected outcomes of the higher education sector. Such circumstances led to further regulatory changes in the sector based on the two master frameworks, which were the 1999 National Education Act and the Second 15-Year Long Range Plan for Higher Education (2008-2022). These two frameworks were supervised by the collective educational professionals with a primary intention to be used as a guide for the higher education reform. At this point, it is apparent that the existing institutional logics of the higher education sector were actually changed to the new ones. In other words, this was the point when the public universities were required to change in accordance with the change in the Government policy. The institutional implications have a significant impact on the move to modernise the higher education sector and within that move; university autonomy is one of the mechanisms exploited in order for them to be capable of delivering certain sets of the Governmental expectations such as; being recognised at international educational levels and increasing research output.

Taking into consideration all the prior discussions, the diffusion of such institutional pressures does not only affect the Thai society and higher education sector but also the universities located in the sector. DiMaggio (1983) defines organisation fields as *“those organizations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognized area of institutional life: key suppliers, resource and product consumers, regulatory agencies, and other organizations that produce service or product”* (p. 148). The development of the emerging context of Thai higher education has been significantly influenced by institutional implications since the early stages. Institutional

pressures, especially, coercive pressures derived from Western countries are fundamental to revolutionary changes in Thai society. The forces trigger awareness of the importance of national education as the essential ingredient for national modernisation. The idea of modernising the country is preserved and transmitted inter-generationally through symbolic systems by utilising higher education as a crucial tool. In other words, in order to modernise the nation successfully, the national education system needs to be modernised first, higher education in particular. Here, it reflects that the underlying basis of the higher education reform is to modernise the existing context. However, there are a number of mechanisms that might be used to achieve the ultimate outcomes, and perhaps university autonomy is the prime one as it directly impacts on the universities operation. It is also moderately obvious that normative pressures generated by Thai educational professionals play a significant role in the later movements of the emerging context. Otherwise, the normative forces are a precursor of coercive and mimetic forces in the context (Greenwood et al., 2002; Scott, 2008c). They create shocks in the existing context and legitimise the desirable structure and practices of the higher education – university autonomy, which they mimic from prestigious international universities through the use of the state authority. Even though, recently, the emerging context of Thai higher education is not yet fully institutionalised, what shows in the study is that institutionalisation is pushing the higher education sector towards a homogenous field (DiMaggio & Powell, 1991). A while after the ‘pioneer’ universities have become autonomous universities and yielded excellent outcomes, a number of other public universities have moved in the same direction. In 2016, out of thirty public universities, there are twenty autonomous universities and a number of public universities are proceeding on this route (Planning Division, 2016).

Moreover, it can be concluded that the new regime of Thai higher education reform is also influenced by internationalisation. It is indicated by one of the driving forces for the changes was people whose own experience was in institutions outside the country. It is also reflected through the Government expectation that they want Thai universities to be more comparable with international universities. This also includes the

government ambition for Thailand to become the educational hub of the ASEAN community. Some universities employ guest lecturers from overseas in order to develop an international environment in the universities. Being recognised at an international level forces the universities to use globally shared benchmarks and that can also lead to homogeneity within the sector.

The study also illustrates another interesting point, which is quite consistent with institutional perspective claiming that operating in the same fashion as others, cannot guarantee the same outcomes (DiMaggio & Powell, 2000). It depends on a number of factors and also the level of institutional complexity they experience. These topics will be discussed further in the following sections.

### **8.3 Institutional complexity in Thai higher education sector**

This section is dealing with institutional complexity that the Thai higher education sector has experienced after the reform. It also covers issues relating to institutional complexity within the universities located in the sector and their responses. Empirical studies have found that even though institutional pressures push organisations towards a similar structure or operation system, the outcomes of each organisation might not be the same. There are a number of factors influencing organisational performance or effectiveness. Such factors relate to both structure of the organisational field and organisational characteristics (Greenwood et al., 2011). This is because the pattern and level of Institutional complexity experienced are shaped by those factors (Dacin et al., 2010). A number of institutional scholars have also argued that the multiple logics if unstable and uncoordinated will generate organisational field fragmentation. As a result, it will be difficult for organisations within the field to conform to the various demands (D'Aunno et al., 1991). Thus, understanding organisational field structure and processes are fundamental to determine how organisations respond to such institutional complexity.

The data obtained in this study reflects what institutional theory suggests. It reveals that the changes brought into Thai higher education



sector exacerbates the level of complexity within the sector. Literally, the education sector is considered to be a more complex organisational context than others due to its distinctive characteristics including having goal ambiguity (Cameron, 1978; Cameron, 1981) and various demands from different sources (Hanson, 2006; Herman & Renz, 1997). Thai higher education is expected to fulfil diverse social expectations of numerous key stakeholders such as; the state, students, parents and industrial sectors. Despite serving the same primary purpose as defined by the social logic side, these demands come from disparate initiators. Each stakeholder introduces their own interests, norms and values that may not be mutually compatible for institutions in the sector to comply with resulting in further complication within the sector.

On the one hand, bringing about university autonomy to the sector is believed to drive the Thai higher education to accomplish these expectations, which in turn, will not only improve academic excellence but also enhance the economic growth of the nation.

On the other hand, autonomy and being more comparable with international universities creates tensions in Thai higher education. Autonomous universities are unintentionally pushed to generate more income in any way possible from other sources. As a result, they need to attract more students as in most cases tuition fees are the second major source of income next to funding received from the Government. Research and academic services are turned into revenue generating operations. Moreover, being recognised at the international level has an impact on research activities in higher education institutions. The universities have to boost the number of publications in order to achieve a good ranking in international league tables. These activities are related to commercial logic, while the universities are regarded as non-profit organisations and still have to maintain social expectations. More importantly, norms, values and the taken-for-granted behaviours of a commercial logic are not likely to be compatible with a social logic (Meyer & Rowan, 1977).

In addition, the Thai higher education sector has multiple constituencies. Each of those has influential power to compel the sector

through individual references. These constituents may include the state as the major provider of financial support, the private sector that employs graduates and supports some funds for academic projects such as, research and ranking organisations who publish and give credits to the universities performance. It may seem that the Government is the most dominant constituent because it contributes vital resources. However, the other constituents also have a significant impact on legitimacy and survival. This diversity presents a highly-fragmented environment and lack of unity in the sector, which can raise the degree of institutional complexity (Pache, 2012; Pache & Santos, 2010a).

Furthermore, the findings also indicate that the stability of Thai higher education sector is temporary. Conflicts can occur when there are shifts in economic conditions and social expectations. These are another factors that heightens the tension inside the sector. The alteration of socioeconomic conditions is a consequence of being pressurised from both internal and external factors leading to a paradigm shift in the Thai society. Such profound change caused the development of the emerging context of the Thai higher education sector, which allows institutional logics to be reprioritised. That rearrangement creates uncertainty, vulnerability and unpredictability (Greenwood et al., 2011; Hoffman, 1999). For example, due to socioeconomic changes, the national expectations of higher education continue to evolve. One of the most noticeable concerns is to be recognised at the international-level and for this the functions of teaching and producing graduates are not sufficient. A number of other functions need to emerge in response to these demands such as; publishing research in international-level journals and technology transfer. Simultaneously, higher education in Thailand has to cultivate sociocultural aspects such as; maintaining Thai arts and culture and distributing academic services to local communities. As a result, the degree of complexity in the sector is amplified by the changes brought into the sector. The claim is in line with Greenwood et al. (2011) who state that institutional conflict can be due to differences in performance criteria.

The existence of fragmentation and on-going conflict inside the Thai higher education sector are bound to have an effect on the universities active in the sector (Seo & Creed, 2002). Organisations operating in such pluralistic environments usually encounter a number of challenges in relation to organisational fragmentation, instability, ambiguous and incoherent goals, issues of legitimacy and governance (Heimer, 1999). However, not every organisation in the sector would be exposed to the same degree. Organisational characteristics including field position, structure, ownership/governance and identity are key components to determine the level of impact (Greenwood et al., 2011). This level of complexity shapes organisational choices and repertoires in response to diverse demands (Pache & Santos, 2010b). Consistent with institutional theory would suggest, the study shows that the three universities featured in the case studies do not face equivalent levels of institutional complexity despite being in the same pluralistic environment. They also adopt different strategic responses to the given pressures due to dissimilar organisational characteristics and histories (Dunn & Jones, 2010). The following paragraphs will discuss the three universities under topics associated with their complexity level, legitimacy, and responses.

To begin with complexity, amongst the three universities, KUT has the least level of constraints from institutional complexity. This is largely due to its origin that it was established as an autonomous university since the beginning. KUT might be a peripheral organisation due to its size and age but it is frequently identified by media, society, and other universities, as a role model. Its organisational strategies and leader preferences show a strong binding to the new institutional framework. The new institutional framework should have an effect on the university's activities at some point. Nevertheless, the lack of historical roots in the sector greatly ease the intensity of complexity experienced by it. The absence of initially embedded norms, values and belief systems allows KUT flexibility in its repertoire to prioritise disparate demands. In contrast, NBU experiences the highest level of complications when compared with KUT and ETUT. The position of peripheral organisation and minimal connectedness with the emerging context, have a reverse impact on NBU when facing with such complexity.

Instead of getting benefits from staying out of the sector scripts, which would allow more flexible discretion, NBU faces severe conflicts from both internal and external constituencies. The negative effects partly result from inadequate preparation, knowledge and support from the field level before the move to become more autonomous. More importantly, NBU has a long history in society as a Buddhist institution. The embodiment of embedded norms and culture is deeply rooted in its traditional identity, which is dramatically misaligned with the sector. As a result, its ability to buffer the complexity is very limited as appropriately specific actions may be impossible for them to utilise. Similar to NBU in terms of the degree of complexity, ETUT comes into contact with the complications occurring in and around the organisation. Being a prestigious university, having a long-established standing and a high level of connectedness to the sector results in ETUT facing more constraints from social prescriptions. In addition to that, ETUT has prior norms, values and beliefs embedded in its organisational culture, as well as a number of internal constituent groups, who give voice to different institutional logics. These circumstances increase the level of internal conflict. However, the study finds that ETUT is more capable of cushioning complexity than NBU. The tied association with the sector is an advantage for ETUT because such a strong bond contributes shared resources, shared necessary knowledge and sufficient support to the university. Even though ETUT might have conflict between the initial identity and the sector scripts to some extent, the core identity does not completely conflict. As a consequence, this provides a little more space for the university to deal more comfortably with the potential conflicts.

Regarding the effect of competing pluralistic demands on the university legitimacy, the theory suggests that the universities have a high tendency to experience various difficulties related to their legitimacy. This is because legitimacy does not only require symbolic conformity but also evidence of organisational commitment to the conformity (Kraatz & Block, 2008). Most likely, constituencies can see it through adopting structures and practices of the universities (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). The issue can become problematic because if the universities conform only to one set of demands, their legitimacy from the others may be undermined (Pratt & Foreman,

2000). The potential for internal conflicts is also greater due to dissimilar expectations (Glynn, 2000). A further concern is that while the universities are seeking legitimacy by complying with diverse institutional prescriptions, their pursuits are also constrained by their histories (Pache & Santos, 2010a). Additionally, institutional logics change over time so maintaining lifetime conformity to particular logics is fairly impracticable. The study illustrates that the three universities face these challenges but in different ways. As a consequence, they address the problems differently, which can be seen through their individual strategic responses. The only similarity found in this study is that all these three universities try most to satisfy the state constituency rather than the others. They all adopt their internal structure and practices to present their commitment to conformity within the limits they individually have, and perhaps regardless of their costs. Though, they yield divergent outcomes.

NBU confronts a more extreme challenge of legitimacy than the other two universities. It cannot effectively compromise between the competing logics and the level of internal conflicts is reasonably high. The adoption of an acquiescence strategy allows NBU to gain legitimacy from the state so that its financial support and academic endorsement can be guaranteed. However, it has lost its incalculable core value and strength of Buddhism as a Buddhist university should be. Two of the reasons would be associated with its founding origin and identity. The founding origin and identity are important in this sense because they exclude other possible approaches to address the issues. Moving towards the emerging context the need for funding results in having low negotiating power. It is like being indirectly forced to entirely conform to the constituency. Meanwhile, the special hallmarks of Buddhism do not fit well with the context. As a result, it limits the capability to have financial freedom from the state or even limits the ability to increase negotiating power. For example, the capability for assertive organisational management and creating benefits for money are quite problematic for monks as it is in conflict with the nature of Buddhism. That is why the university struggles severely to meet minimum state requirements in order to maintain legitimacy.

The theory further suggests that to reduce or eliminate legitimacy problems, the universities must be able to embrace multiple logics into their identities (Battilana & Dorado, 2010; Pache & Santos, 2010a, 2013b; Pratt & Foreman, 2000), or at least strategically compartmentalise disparate logics to meet minimum requirements (Kraatz & Block, 2008). ETUT and KUT are two examples that are able to utilise these techniques. ETUT successfully balances competing demands, while KUT effectively develops its own identity that embraces given multiple logics. Nevertheless, it is important to keep in mind that the two universities have dissimilar origins. This dissimilarity, to some extent, is beneficial for them to reprioritise and interpret the diverse demands. For ETUT its origins might have some negative impacts on the university as the prior norms and value may limit some organisational discretion. KUT can embody multiple logics into its own identity without much concern because it has been established as an autonomous university since the beginning. The university has neither initial identity nor history in the sector. This enlarges the ability of the university to design the ideal organisational structure and practices in response to the diverse demands regardless of internal conflicts and this is evident through the robust management system of the university. The founding origin of ETUT is unlike KUT. It has transformed from its prior status to become an autonomous university and had deep-rooted history in the sector. Although, it has proactively entered the emerging context, the former beliefs still exist in its cultural systems. As a result, internal conflict is inevitable. However, because of its former core identity ETUT is not irreconcilable with the new context, forging a link between the old identity with the new scripts is manageable without losing its core identity of being a technological expert. A clear evidence of the claim is the dual personnel management system, which is used to parallel manage civil servant and contract employees. Moreover, there is a reasonable balance between typical functions, such as teaching and producing graduates and dynamic functions, such as international research publication. This is why ETUT has been chosen to be one out of nine national research universities.

Although, these two universities have achieved some success in academic excellence, financial stability and strategic management,

maintaining arts and culture and distributing academic services to the local community are still overlooked and have received less attention when compared with NBU. This reflects that they tend to focus mainly on the commercial logic side rather than the social side. But to placate social constituent groups, they at least acknowledge social missions to meet minimum requirements so that they can maintain legitimacy.

Taking into consideration all the discussion above, the study provides some insights that founding origin and identity are the important factors for the universities when dealing with institutional complexity. This also includes identity at both institutional and organisational levels, as there actually is a link between the two levels. The universities can make claims to belong to a certain group when they seek legitimacy, which is related to identity at institutional level. Identity at organisational level on the other hand, considers the differentiation of universities locating in the same claimed group. However, if they locate themselves in a fragmented sphere and their initial identities and origins do not fit with the given group, their legitimacy or valuable uniqueness may be in danger. This is because such incoherence limits a university's discretion when confronted with the given complexity. As a result, identity is not just about how the universities situate themselves into the emerging context but how to successfully demonstrate their commitment to the taken for granted prescriptions of the group (Glynn, 2008; Glynn & Abzug, 2002; Kraatz & Block, 2008). Also, if the universities obey only certain demands, legitimacy gained from the other constituencies may be in jeopardy due to lack of enough attention from the universities. Therefore, it can be concluded that restriction on only one appropriate form of management may not be possible when trying to satisfy diverse demands. It seems that the Government is trying to create some kind of homogenised structure into the fragmented sector by inserting its expectations and preferred form into the sector through coercive and normative mechanisms. However, what might have emerged here is the awareness of the sector fragmentation and the uniqueness of each university, which has been confirmed by a number of scholars noting that these are predominant factors of how organisations approach the competing demands facing them. Thus, understanding what factors

influence the universities when encountering and responding to the pluralistic demands is crucial, as it will affect their legitimacy and ability to access to vital resources, which in turn will affect their survival (Purdy & Gray, 2009).

#### **8.4 Institutionalisation and organisational change in Thai higher education**

This section will discuss a sense of institutional theory perspective about organisational change of the Thai higher education. It includes some tendencies and/or certain circumstances that the universities might experience as a result from the impact of various institutional pressures.

Institutional theory does not only describe implications for organisational complexity but also provides an underlying basis for understanding organisational change. According to the earlier discussion, it is argued that the regulatory changes brought into the Thai higher education sector, brought considerable complexity into the sector. Given that complexity affects the universities locating within the sector but at different levels. Institutional theory perspective would argue that multiple and competing demands do not necessarily have to have negative impacts on organisations, particularly with regard to organisational change. Instead, these various demands can create a dynamic organisation, which is able to be responsive to a range of given demands but only if the organisation knows how to change and deal effectively with the diverse demands.

This perspective suggests that in a pluralistic environment such as the Thai higher education sector, organisational change is likely to encounter a number of challenges (Kraatz & Block, 2008). First, the universities may have difficulty in defining the meaning of change because different constituencies may prefer them to show their compliance differently. This leads to the concern that if the given change does not fit with the current organisational form, a university may have to define the meaning of change and calculate its consequences before implementing any changes. The most likely form of change in such an environment is an uncontrolled change or change without intention (Kraatz & Zajac, 1996). It



is true that constituent groups in the sector including in the universities are able to independently interpret or give voice to changes. Though, it is also more likely that their interpretation and voices will reflect those that are institutionally taken for granted. The universities that perform change only for satisfying constituencies in order to secure their survival without deliberate concern about their histories and core identity have a potential to become unstable, irresponsible and unresponsive organisations.

By looking at the individual cases under the study, NBU is experiencing these difficulties. The primary purpose of its change was to escape from financial instability. Moreover, the regulatory change that the state has introduced, forces the university to change its status without proper preparation and adequate calculation of ultimate consequences. After the move, the university finds that the institutionally derived prescriptions do not fit with its distinctive characteristics. The study also shows that the university is not capable of balancing its institutional commitment and its core identity. Therefore, it cannot take control of multiple demands imposed on it. Changes that the university performs are too far further from necessary limit. Consequently, the university has lost its Buddhist strength, which is very valuable within Thai society.

In contrast to NBU, KUT and ETUT are able to address these difficulties more successfully. It is not surprising for KUT to have such a capability. The reasons being that it has leaders who have broader visions and who were well prepared before its establishment. They know exactly what is going to happen when the university is located in the sector. Thus, the core identity is developed in such a way that institutionally derived demands are embraced.

ETUT is slightly different from KUT in terms of its history. The university has been transformed from a bureaucratic status to an autonomous model. Inevitably it will face problems related to organisational change. However, the university is aware of its history and core identity during the transformation. ETUT not only gives value to the new institutions but also its core strength and competencies. Whatever changes it makes, it always realises its core value and competencies. What is reflected here is

a strong sense of holding the university to not change any further than the point where it is not responsible for its core value and history. This can be seen through the development of robust strategic management that can respond effectively to the pluralistic demands.

The insights emerged from this aspect are that core identity, history and leadership are significant variables to determine how the universities are capable of applying change. Particularly, change, that is in complicated context such as the higher education sector. The core identity and history work are cornerstones preventing the universities from swinging too far further from their origins. A smart university that can survive in such a pluralistic environment is the university that can take advantage of the pluralism and perform change intelligently. It can do so by balancing institutionally derived diverse demands and its core identity and history in its own right to create a more dynamic identity gathering various demands together. A good balance between the two open a chance for the university to reprioritise and reinterpret a given meaning of change suitable for the organisation 'self'. This can enhance organisational legitimacy as well. In regard to leadership, the study finds that it is another important variable of organisational change. To perform an intelligent change requires deliberate calculations of the ultimate consequences. To some extent this can prevent the chance of unintentional change within the university. Leadership roles are crucial in such calculative processes and organisational change processes.

### **8.5 Thai higher education and organisational effectiveness under institutional theory perspective**

Institutional framework not only shapes the desirable goals and organisational form – university autonomy – but also the meanings of organisational effectiveness both at the sector and individual university levels. In consistence with the three waves of the higher education development, during each move, it is also reflected how the institutional framework determines the meanings of organisational effectiveness.

In the very first stage of the sector development, where the influence of Western countries impacted heavily on the Thai society, the regulatory forces indirectly pressured society and higher education to modernise the country in order to avoid being colonised. It was the time when the institutional logic of modernisation spread across the society. Higher education as a public organisation, with funds provided only from the Government was then expected by both society and the Government to play a significant role in driving the country in response to such pressures. As a result, the meaning of higher educational effectiveness was determined as modernising the nation and effective performance was reflected through how well the universities were able to produce adequate numbers of quality graduates to improve the national infrastructures. It is evident that most graduates at that time were produced to serve the internal needs of the country.

However, due to the nature of institutions that are not static, they can be interpreted, blended and transmitted through a variety of carriers over time depending on the dominance of institutional forces (Scott, 2008b). This could be the reason why the meanings of effectiveness and effective performances are also changed over time, which can be seen from the later stages of development focusing more on increasing the national competitiveness and being recognised internationally.

A while after the earlier stage, the institutional pressures from both internal and external sources including the acceleration of the economic crisis were dominant significantly in the Thai higher education sector. Within this period of time, normative and cultural-cognitive systems highlighted the meanings of effectiveness and effective performances. Most of the Thai elite coming back from studying overseas brought about the ideas of what higher education should be and focus on. They mimicked the ideas from a number of highly respected international universities – mostly from Europe and The United State – into the society. Through their strong networks and the use of power in the Government agencies such as; the Ministry of Education, they then institutionalised such concepts as taken for granted. Consequently, the goal of modernising the country has been expanded into

raising national competitiveness and being recognised internationally. Particularly, as Thailand became one of the members of the ASEAN Community in 2015. The state ambition in the dimension of higher education is for Thailand to become the educational hub of the ASEAN community. The state thus, is working on the strategic plans to fulfil such an ambition. As a result of changes in the ultimate goals, the meaning of an effective university and indicators of this are also changed even though the wording might stay the same. For example, the abilities of graduates to develop the national infrastructures cannot fulfil the national needs anymore. Rather, the universities are required not only to produce graduates in response to the local labour market needs but also encouraging the desirable characteristics of quality graduates, who are able to work in multiple cultures. Communicable English language then becomes necessary as well as maintaining Thai wisdoms, arts and culture. Similarly, the quality of research is not just generating new knowledge to improve the national affairs but it is the number of publications at the international level. In terms of academic services, it is related to distributing academic knowledge to the industrial sector instead of purely contributing Thai wisdoms to the society. The state believes that to be responsive to these expectations, university autonomy is a key principle. This simply means that effectiveness under the Government perspective is to be effective in terms of the use of limited resources and resources acquisition to fulfil the social missions by utilising a greater level of autonomy. As a result, the state legislated strategic plans and policies such as; the First and Second 15-Year Long Rang plan and the quality assurance system for the universities within the sector to follow (Scott, 2008b). With close monitoring by the state and accreditation agencies, the universities will need to illustrate how well they meet these expectations and criteria in order to obtain financial support. In other words, the universities will get funded based on their performances. This reflects the influence of regulatory frameworks on the reinforcement of what effectiveness means.

In sum, it seems that in the Thai higher education, institutions have an enormous impact on the way effectiveness and effective performances are defined (Scott, 2005). The normative framework seems to be the most dominant of institutional aspects shaping these meanings in the first place.

Together with the normative aspect, the cultural-cognitive aspect plays a significant role in interpreting these meaning as the “taken for granted” meaning. While the regulatory framework makes them more formalised to secure compliance of the universities through the resources control.

By taking the three universities under the study into account, the study provides some insights that are worth noting. It appeared that the Thai Government is trying to develop some kind of standardisation and homogeneity in the sector by pushing the universities towards producing outcomes that are consistent with competitive with international university outcomes. The Government wants the Thai universities to be seen and measured in the particular criteria as university internationally in terms of recognised outcomes. For its own purposes, the Government can drive the sector for more autonomy and might have some ideas towards an effective university. However, accepting the model of those outcomes as being international standards, the universities do not necessarily have to become identical to international universities. That is where the autonomy becomes so important. The three universities in this study represent a good example of this claim. KUT and ETUT clearly want to be internationally competitive. Their leaders play a very significant role in the formation of this ambition as they are those who pioneered the higher education reform. On the other hand, for NBU the priority was not so much to be internationally competitive but to secure a more sustainable source of funding for the institution. In fact, the university wants to maintain the Buddhist characteristics, value and philosophy, which clearly the new regime may not preserve as a priority. Within the move to a greater level of autonomy, there are other factors that will impact on whether the university is effective in terms of how it sees itself and what it is as a university. Such factors are related to organisational identity and history.

It is the identity and history that shape the way the university institutionalise itself and generate organisational uniqueness. As a result, not every university is the same in terms of distinctive characteristics. For example, NBU has the reputation in relation to its Buddhist links that is highly prided and valued. The move towards autonomous model would let

NBU to be part of the new institutional framework. While, it might have been more difficult if NBU was under the old institutional framework (Bureaucratic system). This is because with the new institutional framework like more autonomy, NBU can be part of the higher education system, while it has more freedom to maintain their uniqueness. ETUT would have a very strong reputation because of the way it is positioned historically in the sector and it will hang on to that reputation. Unlike ETUT, KUT is a newer university, which is a more 'technical' university. Its strength and reputation would be in association with the new breed of 'technical' institutions. What is seen here is that even the term "high reputation" can depend on what kind of reputation or aspects people are looking for. Likewise, the concept of organisational effectiveness, which is a complex concept and construct in terms of its meaning and measures (Cameron, 1978; Cameron, 1986; Cameron, 1981). This is because there might be a whole range of different factors determined from various perspectives, interests and stakeholders within a particular organisation whether or not it is effective in terms of disparate attitudes (Daprano, 2001; Herman & Renz, 1999). For instance, on behalf of the Government ambition of pushing the sector towards a greater level of autonomy, one of reasons might be to achieve a certain degree of independent responsibility in terms of economic criteria. Thus, the Government might be looking for the universities to be more efficient in terms of the use of the Government funding. These would be more efficiency measures rather than effectiveness measure up to a point. While, in the universities point of view, they might be looking at themselves as how well they have been in maintaining their commitments to their histories and value system, they are still looking to meet some of the state agency requirements. That is why they are moving into line but they still have some association with their historical roots. It is very obvious to see these attitudinal differences in the NBU case study. The university is striving to survive so that it has made a profound move and at the end it can survive but with a high non-financial cost. What is revealed here is that organisational effectiveness can be measured against different benchmarks. It is entirely based on what aspects stakeholders are looking for. Consequently, perhaps it is not necessarily or entirely useful to look at

all universities with identical measures or to apply a universal measuring approach with them all and that homogeneity may not be the ultimate answer.

## Chapter 9

### Conclusion and Implication

This research was set out to explore “*the impact of autonomy on the effectiveness of Thai universities under the institutional theory perspective*”. For the purposes of this research, the research question comprises of sub-questions as follows:

1. How have the three universities under study responded to the autonomous system set out by the Thai Government?
2. How has the recent change in the universities’ capabilities, (which delegated responsibility for governance, academic, financial and personal management), affected the traditional long standing four main missions set out by the Thai Government (including producing graduates, conducting research, providing academic services and cultivation Thai arts and culture)?
3. Are the outcomes of each university different? If so, what factors might lead to differences in the level of success?
4. Is homogeneity of goals and missions set out by the Government the key to autonomous university effectiveness in Thailand?

The three cases chosen under the study represent different tensions of becoming autonomous universities as follows:

1. brand new autonomous university – KUT
2. former public university, which has voluntarily become an autonomous university – ETUT
3. university with special character based on cultural values and belief, which has become an autonomous model due to resources scarcity – NBU



Some insights of the study have been discussed already in the prior chapter in response to the research objectives. Thus, this chapter aims at unfolding these research questions, presenting summaries of the discussion and implication of the study. Also, this chapter includes future research suggestion accordingly.

## **9.1 Unfolding research questions**

*9.1.1 Question 1: How have the three individual universities responded to the autonomous system set out by the Government?*

The research found that the three universities have worked to comply with the autonomous system set out by the Government. Though the way they have responded are different and in varying degrees as they have experienced different level of institutional complexity. These responses reflected through their strategic plans.

As discussed earlier in chapter 8, the autonomous model set out by the state has exacerbated the level of complexity within the Thai higher education sector by increasing number of competing demands for the universities to comply with. For example, the autonomous model forces the universities to generate their own income, while the universities are expected to be responsible for contributing academic services to the society. Under the societal perspective, this should not be done in the form of commercial ways. Given increase in these completing demands has an effect on the universities located within the sector as well. Due to variation in the organisational characteristics of each university, they have faced different tensions of the system complexity. Therefore, their available choices of response are limited and such limited choices are usually based on their distinct nature and conditions. For example, out of the three universities, NBU is the one that has encountered the greatest level of tensions from the autonomous model and is struggling the most. The university has chosen to comply completely with the new prescriptions by utilising an acquiescent technique without realising the cost of losing its distinctive characteristics. This is mainly because the primary reasons of the university to be gathered in the sector are to secure its financial support and

to seek broader social acceptance. Inability to earn its own income due to the restrictions of Buddhist norms and values leave the university with no choice to negotiate with the state demands. Any changes that the university has made are just to satisfy the state demands in order to maintain its legitimacy, which in turn can guarantee its financial support. However, the university did not realise that these changes are inordinate and moving too far from its deep-rooted history. It becomes even more difficult when the university found that its history in regard to being a Buddhist university contrasted with the scripts of the new system. That is why NBU finds itself struggling with operating in the autonomous system. This is in contrast to the other two cases – ETUT and KUT.

ETUT has responded to the new system introduced by the state by adopting the strategic response that maintains the balance between new prescriptions and its historical and distinctive characteristics. Therefore, the changes that the university has brought about are not extreme in degree of change like NBU. The university is still committed to its historical uniqueness but at the same time, it uses the advantages of an autonomous model to increase value of the university. For example, as a science and technological university, the university realises that building new knowledge such as research is a very important aspect. The new system opens chances for the university to seek research funding from private organisations such as the industrial sector. This contributes to positive feedback to the university as research conducted ultimately turns into monetary value to the university. Moreover, an increase in level of research contributed to the university becoming one of the national research universities, which means that the university would have more financial support from the Government.

It is not that ETUT has not experienced challenges from the institutional complexity generated by the autonomous system. It has encountered both external and internal complexity as it has shifted its status from a public university to become an autonomous university. The previous norms and value still constrain it to some extent. However, such a reasonable degree of response compromises the degree of tensions. Its

forward-thinking leaders can also twist those challenges and turn them into benefit. As a result, the university is one of the top universities in Thailand.

KUT is on the other hand, due to its initiation, has met a minimal amount of institutional complexity. Consequently, it has less tensions and conflicts when compared with the other two universities. The lower level of tensions and conflicts has allowed the university to respond to the autonomous system more comfortably. The university has created its own identity, which aggregates the pluralistic demands from different constituencies. Therefore, even though the university fully responds to the new system, the organisational structure set out since its initiation has supported the new system norms and value. As a result, the impact of an autonomous model on this university is not severe in terms of managing such competing demands.

However, the research shows an interesting point in regard to organisational filter components introduced in the theoretical framework. The level of field connectedness is of particular interest. This is because it is one of the components causing the universities to experience different level of institutional complexity. Institutional theory suggests that the higher level of field connectedness, the more likely the universities would experience a greater level of institutional complexity. In effect, it should be more difficult for them to deal with such complexity as there is a higher chance for them to get constrained from the field prescriptions. Nevertheless, the researcher finds a reverse impact of this aspect in the three universities, which is in a contrary direction from what the theory suggests. Some universities benefit from having a strong bond with their context, even though, they might experience institutional complexity to some extent. ETUT and KUT are examples. They have yielded better outcomes in terms of operating and surviving in the turbulent environment of the emerging context when compared with NBU that has never been part of the old institutional framework before. The tied association with the context contributes supports in the form of shared resources and necessary knowledge to the universities. These resources and knowledge do help the universities in many ways when operating within the emerging context.

What is shown in this research reflects that institutional theory may not always fit so well with institutions within different context, especially, in the Thai higher education context, which has got unique points. This could be because the institutional perspective has been largely developed from the perspective of American and European institutions. As a result, there is a real possibility that institutional theory and a lot of main stream management theories are cultural specific.

*9.1.2 Question 2: How has the recent change in the consecutive universities' capabilities, which delegated responsibility for governance, academic, financial and person management, affected the traditional long standing four main missions set out by the Government including producing graduates, conducting research, providing academic services and cultivation Thai arts and culture?*

It is the Government's intention when introducing the concept of university autonomy to the society that it will enable universities to generate their own incomes through the use of a more flexible management mechanism, which in turn will diminish the national budget allocated to the higher education. Moreover, it is believed that the autonomous system will enhance the capabilities of institutions to build up national competitiveness by being recognised at an international level. The research confirms that a greater level of autonomy seems to provide greater freedom in the areas of university governance, academic, financial and personnel management, which in turn contributes the universities being more effective in terms of achievement in relation to these four main missions. It is evident that to some extent, the outcomes are certainly trending in the direction that the Government expects to see, although, the outcomes are not even for every institution and not all missions are equally achieved. It seems that all three universities have increased responsibilities due to the autonomous model and all work to also maintain a focus upon Thai arts and culture. However, those with a cultural focus face greater challenges to meet the competing goals of an autonomous university and Thai arts and culture.

The research shows some interesting points that the autonomous system does open chances for the three universities to generate their own

incomes, which should have reduced the Government's burden in term of financial supports. However, in reality, it does not reduce burden of the Government in terms of subsidising the higher education as they promoted in the earlier stage of reforming. The three universities tend to receive more annual budget provided by the Government every year after they have become autonomous universities. Naturally, some of the increase can be attributed to inflation. However, there is a real possibility that the increase is a result of the Government's subsidisation for the universities' special projects such as building facilities projects. Even though, part of the increase is due to inflation, but when looking at the ratio of what the universities get from the Government and what they generate their own incomes, some universities have yielded incredible outcomes. While, the other relies heavily on the Government.

Additionally, only some universities have been able to efficiently generate their incomes, while, the other has not. For example, KUT got funded from the Government 562.87 million Thai Baht in 1998 and that funding continuously increased up to 1,045.68 million Thai Baht in 2013 (see appendix B2). The average proportion of the Government funding during those years was close to 60% of its total revenue, which means that the university produced its own incomes approximately of 40%. ETUT received 545.46 million Thai Baht from the Government in 2004 then slightly climbed up every year until it reached 1,342.64 million Thai Baht in 2012 (see appendix C2). But these amounts of budget were equivalent to only 40% of its total budget and the rest 60% was generated by the university. In contrast, NBU received 79.45 million Thai Baht from the Government in 1999 and dramatically raised up to 722.27 million Thai Baht in 2011 (see appendix D2). The annual budget provided by the Government was as high as 86%. This is meant that NBU was only able to manage a very minimal amount of its own incomes.

Furthermore, the research finds that the main missions contributed to generating monetary value and enhancing national competitiveness are achieved quite effectively in some universities but not the other. Such missions include producing quality graduates, academic services and

conducting research. These missions are priority from the Government perspective. Especially, conducting research mission that seems to be the Government's prime concern as it directly helps to improve national competitiveness in terms of being recognised at an international level. The level of research output has increased dramatically in KUT and ETUT. The number of international publications of KUT has significantly increased between 2007 and 2012. In 2012, the number was 652 articles, which was nearly twice as much as the number of publication in 2007, which was 394 articles (see appendix B8). Likewise, the number of research outputs of ETUT tended to grow larger every year during 2001 to 2012. In 2012, ETUT had research papers a total of 1,166 papers that increased by three times when comparing with year 2001, which had only 350 papers (see appendix C11). Whereas, NBU has experienced difficulty in fulfilling this mission due to a number of reasons. It is reflected in the figure of the university's budget allocation in 2011, which showed that the university only allocated 0.66% of the total budget to support the research mission (see appendix D3).

Producing graduates seems to be the only mission that all the three universities have successfully achieved in the same manner. In other words, the number of graduates and the graduates' employment rates are high and constant. For instance, the employment rate of undergraduate students of KUT was 87.62% in 2010 (see appendix B7). The percentage of employed postgraduate of ETUT was 79% in average and for graduate students was never less than 50% even in during the economic crisis period (see appendix C9). For NBU, its president has claimed that the number of students is increasing and those who graduated found it was easier to get employed (see chapter 7).

Although, NBU has struggled in most of the missions and cannot generate a significant amount of monetary value from providing academic services, the university pays more attention on the cultivation of Thai arts and culture than KUT and ETUT. NBU allocated more budget on this mission than the other two universities. In 2011, the amount of money put for this mission was 11.54 million Thai Baht (see appendix D3), which was considerably higher than KUT that only invested two to three million Thai

Baht (see chapter 5). Whereas, ETUT utilised around eight million Thai Baht on this mission in 2011 (see appendix C13).

In sum, taking into consideration all the statement above, it is clearly seen that the impact of autonomous system as described in the cases has left them to more freedom of activity in the areas related to their internal management, which in turn has led to improvement and development in terms of the four main missions. It is acceptable to say that the outcomes are moving towards the direction that the Government hopes for to some extent in some universities. However, it is also important to note that the degree of success is varying in individual university. This research suggests that the ease and speed with which a university is able to adapt to an autonomous model will be reflected in the extent to which the Government missions are achieved. Universities that are struggling to adapt will achieve at lower levels in terms of the objectives and missions. NBU is an example. Whereas, those universities that are able to effectively adapt to an autonomous model like KUT and ETUT will achieve at higher levels. Therefore, it may be beneficial for some universities if the Government develops mechanisms to identify those universities that are struggling or which are more likely to struggle and put in place measures to provide additional support and assistance while the university makes the adjustment to an autonomous model. Such measures should be developed with recognition that standard measures may not work as each university will have its own unique characteristics and support measures must be tailored to suit. Thus, discovering what causes such different outcomes may be helpful for the universities operating in the autonomous system or even for the policy makers to see from the different angles.

*9.1.3 Question 3: Are the outcomes of each university different? If so, what factors might lead to differences in the level of success?*

The research has obviously shown that the three universities featured in this study have experienced different tensions from the institutional complexity when operating under the autonomous system. The factors influencing such different levels of complexity are largely due to dissimilar organisational characteristics such as historical roots and

identities. That is why there are some development and improvement in terms of what the Government expects to see in some universities, while the other has struggled.

The autonomous model does provide some advantages in terms of more flexible management. However, it has brought about some challenges to the universities by increasing numbers of competing demands for the universities to respond to. The autonomous model is more likely to lean on commercial logic such as earning income, while the universities are also responsible for social logic such as maintaining arts and culture and providing academic services to society. The commercial logic and social logic, sometimes, are not compatible. They also have different constituencies who have different demands. The research indicates that, while the universities are seeking legitimacy by trying to comply with these multiple demands, their activities are constrained by their historical roots and identities, particularly when these historical roots and identities are incompatible with the new system's prescriptions. This is because these variables if inconsistent with the context's taken for granted, exclude possible approaches to address the complexity issues. The interesting case of this study is NBU, which has confronted severe conflicts from the new system and now its uniqueness as a Buddhist institution is in jeopardy. The university has long history in the society and the embodiment of its embedded norms and value is profoundly rooted in its traditional identity. Given that this deeply rooted initial identity is very much misaligned with the new context, there are limitations on some activities that may be used to reduce the complexity. For example, the special hallmarks of Buddhism are one of the boundaries that restrict the university's capabilities for assertive organisational management and generating income, which are crucial functions of an autonomous university as defined by the Thai Government. Within these difficult circumstances, there is nothing much NBU can do except to completely comply with the state demands, at least, just to meet minimum state requirement in order to maintain stable financial support. Though, the distinctive characteristics of the university, which are of incalculable value for the Thai society are being demolished.



In contrast to NBU, ETUT and KUT have experienced the influence of complexity to some extent. However, their histories and identities are not absolutely inconsistent with the new context. ETUT has a long history in the higher education sector because it has transformed from a public university to become an autonomous university. It was also the first university that wanted to transform voluntarily. Thus, it is inevitable for ETUT to experience a certain level of institutional complexity due to its previous norms, values and beliefs. Its leadership plays a significant role in the change processes leading to an effective balance between its core identity of being a centre for technological expertise and the new scripts. In addition, it may be that the nature of ETUT's core identity does not completely mismatch the new scripts, which makes it a little easier for the university to address the complexity issues.

KUT is on the other hand, a university that was established as an autonomous university since its beginning. The university has no previous norms and value embedded in it. Its organisational strategies, structure and identity have been developed to serve the purposes of the autonomous model. The lack of historical roots in the sector may greatly ease the level of complexity imposed on it. This allows the university to maximise its repertoire to buffer the impact of such complexity quite effectively.

Another factor that the research indicates as a factor that might lead to differences in the level of success, is leadership style within the individual institutions. It is not always true that competing demands will have to create negative impacts on the universities, especially when performing changes. Sometimes, these competing demands can create a dynamic university, which is able to be responsive to complex environment, but only to those who know how to control and deliberately calculate consequences of changes. Therefore, this research suggests that the quality of leadership is going to be crucial in determining how effective these universities are within the autonomous model. The nature of being more autonomous and more independent requires leadership that can deal with experiences in that context. This is because autonomy implies more independence and more independence needs skilled leadership. This is a very different kind of

leadership, not better or worse. There may be problems in finding quality leadership for some of those that have moved in an autonomous position from the old kind of structure. This is because they might be drawing for their leadership from people whose experience is in the bureaucratic or other structures of the past. NBU is an example. Thus, there may be a need to address questions of leadership. A good example of capable leadership is ETUT. The university can successfully survive in such a turbulent environment because its leaders are able to take advantage of more autonomy. They always realise the strength of the university's distinctive characteristics and core identity and use these special characteristics and identity as cornerstones when performing changes. This is to prevent the university initiating changes that exceed its limitations, which could potentially damage the university's valuable core identity. Moreover, ETUT is able to minimise the intensity of complexity imposed on it

*9.1.4 Question 4: Is homogeneity of goals and missions set out by the Government the key to autonomous university effectiveness in Thailand?*

Institutionalisation has a wide range of effects on the Thai higher education and the universities located within the sector. The influence of institutional pressures has a significant impact upon the evolution of the sector to shaping the definition of university effectiveness. In the first movement of the sector's evolution, regulative and normative pressures played significant roles in constraining the activities of the sector. Those pressures came from outside of the country, mainly from Western countries. In order to avoid being colonised from those countries, on their terms, leaders in the higher education sector decided upon a level of conformity. The second movement resulted largely from socioeconomic factors. Normative pressure was highlighted in this movement because the Thai elites played a predominant role in pushing the sector towards a greater level of autonomy. In the last movement, the sector was pressurised by both internal and external factors. Normative and coercive pressures were the main causes. Though, the "Tom Yum Koong crisis" was an accelerator in driving the sector towards autonomous model.

The research also finds that it is the Government's intention to build some kind of standardisation and homogeneity of goals and missions within the sector. It seems that university autonomy is the core principle to bring about such expected outcomes. This is because the universities have to accept a common framework of objectives and missions together with a common set of performance criteria. The Government believes that university autonomy will enable the universities to have more freedom to determine how they achieve the outcomes and do not have to aim for homogeneity in structure and process. Doing so can create effective universities, which are responsive to today's world. However, it appears that the autonomous orientation exacerbates the level of complexity within the sector by increasing the number of competing demands. That absolutely impacts on the universities within the sector in different ways depending upon their founding principles and practices. The three universities are the valuable lessons for Thai autonomous universities. Each come from different origins ranging from initially being born as, transforming to and being forced to become an autonomous university as defined by the Government. Each represents different institutional tensions. They eventually have moved to fit into the new context in different ways due to the variations of their institutional natures. They also show that the level of institutional complexity imposed on them are varied depending on their distinctive characteristics. The first two universities, KUT and ETUT effectively responded to the emerging context with little apparent negative impact. However, for NBU to survive in an environment, which is hostile to its fundamental principles and purposes, it is at risk of losing its strong sense of Buddhist faith. These various outcomes are largely due to each university historical roots, identities and leadership roles as discussed in chapter 8. These variables are significantly important because they contribute to determining how the universities respond to such complications as well as what options are available for them to be taken into account.

Furthermore, the research gives light to the effectiveness aspect. The meaning of effectiveness is shaped by institutions, which in their nature can be changed, blended or transformed over time. As a result, the definition of effectiveness can also be varied from time to time. The concept

of effectiveness itself is widely accepted by scholars that it is a complex concept. There are a large number of factors affecting its interpretation. Different constituencies may have differently effective references depending on their beliefs and interests. The universities themselves may have their own perspective, which may not be the same as the state one. In other words, it is more like “effective in terms of who’s view”. As a result, the definition of effectiveness is varied, its measurement is also varied. Applying a universal form of government to measure every university without realising their uniqueness might not be helpful or appropriate.

These research findings supply some insights in relation to the advantages and disadvantages and complexities of the move towards autonomous model in terms of management. However, the contribution of institutional variations should be taken into account. This research, thus, indicates some useful implications for the future of the Thai higher education, which will be suggested in the following section.

## **9.2 Conclusion and implications for policies and practices**

A variety of studies show that if autonomy does not lead to excellence in academics, governance and financial management of the institutions, it can be safely concluded that autonomy has been misused in management. However, not many studies studying the issue of university autonomy consider the complex nature of university when adopting an autonomous model. This research reveals that the attempt to push Thai higher education towards a greater level of autonomy from the Government has its strength and flaws. Taking into account these advantages and disadvantages would contribute to Thai higher education decision making in the future. This study compiles some concerns for policy makers to consider.

University autonomy has several advantages for Thai higher education. The autonomous system has been applied to the higher education institutions because it is expected to be able to enhance university efficiency and effectiveness. Autonomy in principle enables institutions to have more freedom in terms of individual management. This

also includes the liberty to utilise financial resources in a prudent and accountable way, which may help to achieve some of the independent responsibilities in terms of some economic criteria. Such flexibility in terms of management can enable individual universities to be more responsive to future issues and to the missions set out by the Government effectively. It is revealed in this research that the Thai Government is convincing Thai higher education institutions to adopt autonomous model as it is a principle that is widely accepted internationally. From the Government's perspective, autonomous system can respond to what they expect such as a decrease of Government's financial burden, an increase in self-sufficiency and flexibility and being recognised at international level. Moreover, with the competitive and moving environment, autonomy is a selected option for higher education institutions to respond to society's needs.

Nevertheless, the structure of the autonomous model is closely linked to attaching higher education to economic conditions. Autonomous universities often have to use business principles of administration and market-like methods for increasing revenue. The scarcity of funding also pushes the universities to seek funds from industrial sectors. Therefore, it is inevitable that research activities and academic services are turned into revenue generating operations. Given this dependency on securing sources of funding it has a negative impact on academic freedom in higher education, which should be about freedom to discover truth, freedom to think and freedom to speak. The other concern over this new regime is an inclination to judge the universities based on their abilities to achieve economic prosperity rather than on their overall contributions to the society in terms of personal, cultural and social development.

It is also important for the Government to acknowledge if the operation of autonomous university is effective and efficient. The complicated issue is how to measure the effectiveness of higher educational institutions. The Government obviously focuses on how to increase economic prosperity and economic competitiveness resulting in creating educational standardisation based on the goal of becoming educational competition in the global level. The Government aims at evaluating all

universities' effectiveness with the same benchmark influenced from global benchmark in order to enhance Thai educational institutions' standard as the same as other world-class educational institutions. Therefore, driving the higher education institutions of the Government to accept the same common framework and performance criteria, is to develop homogeneity, standardisation and consistency in the sector in terms of objectives and missions.

While developing such standardisation and homogeneity has plenty of benefits, this research has revealed a number of concerns with the pursuit of homogeneity. Although, effectiveness and consistency are something that both the Government and universities have to be concerned with, there still can be a great deal of variation in terms of society's needs. Such aspects are related to history, identity and unique characteristics. Other than that, the Government might have to carefully consider what could be used to measure effectiveness in those terms due to the fact that each institution has its own interests and priorities which cause ambiguity with efforts to achieve standardisation. Therefore, it would be unhelpful for the Government to have too high expectation of applying some universal measures of effectiveness across universities in order to look at how well they are working.

Presently, the Government is benchmarking Thai higher education against the world and potentially the performance evaluation processes are becoming the same. This would make all educational institutions around the world become so similar. It is acceptable that making the higher education becomes universal-standardised universities can promote them to achieve world widely well-known and can bring economic prosperity. However, it is noteworthy to take individually distinctive characteristics into account. This would help to understand how the universities should be properly evaluated because a holistic benchmark may not fit with every university. High reputation could depend on what kind of reputation that people are looking for. There are many avenues that outputs can reflect particular characteristics of individual institutions. These can achieve criteria of effectiveness by considering at individually particular strength depending on

how the institutions define and identify themselves, which reflect their histories. The term high reputation could be that the universities have a high reputation in the same range of their expert areas. Thus, when looking at how effective they are, it should come from the basis individual universities are still able to maintain their priorities or historical roots in their own way. Particularly, it becomes evident, at least, later that the Government is planning on becoming an educational hub after Thailand has joined the ASEAN Community. Allowing the universities, a space for a level of diversity within the complex context would increase the level of their capacity so they can specialise and market themselves more effectively. This could lead to richer dimensions for Thai higher education and the ability to attract a larger number of audiences because of the level of individuality that each is able to enhance.

In sum, even though autonomy brings more flexibility in management in order to respond to the educational competitiveness around the world, it perhaps, might not be suitable for all kinds of universities. Being affected by external forces in terms of universal benchmark has pushed all university standards in the same direction that shapes them to become more similar to one another regardless of their own interests and priorities. The key points to consider are:

- firstly, if autonomy can respond to all needs of all kinds of higher educational institutions.
- next, how these educational institutions with different interests struggle to preserve their interests under a universal standard based on commercial and entrepreneurial regimes and
- lastly, how educational institutions will be properly evaluated under the condition of their own interests being maintained.

This research is suggesting that for the autonomous model to work or to achieve at its best, there should be a good balance between maintaining the priorities and historical roots of the individual universities and the requirements of the Government policy for higher education. Not only would this balance protect the value and the uniqueness of the universities, and the country, for both cultural and marketing reasons but also build a level of insulation against the pressures of competing with the

world. Moreover, there need to be close attention to appropriate leadership at top. It may be that there are problems in finding the quality of leadership from those whose experiences has been in different kinds of environment, such as a government run bureaucracy. Therefore, it may be unrealistic for the Government to assume that experiences of leading within a bureaucratic structure means that leadership is going to be effective within an autonomous model. It also may be unreasonable to expect them to have the experiences and skills necessarily for leadership within an autonomous model and it might take some time for universities, transforming to an autonomous model, to develop the kind of leadership that is needed.

### **9.3 Future research recommendations**

This research is conducted with the primary purpose to examine how autonomy has an effect on university's effectiveness in the context of Thai higher education. After the in-depth analysis and discussions, there are three aspects arising from the study that are worth for future research. The first aspect is related to the extent to which the Thai autonomous universities can sustain their uniqueness, particular strength and values while seeking to survive in the complex context of the higher education sector. What factors would promote such sustainability, especially, in the Thai context. The second aspect is related to the underlying assumption identified in this thesis that the Bureaucratic system is not responsive to the Government dictate and in order to be more competitive internationally, moving towards autonomous structures is the only way. However, this thesis recognises that variation within the autonomous model is appropriate and in reality, there may be alternatives. Therefore, it would be interesting to consider what the alternatives might have been (if there were any). The next issue is associated with leadership within the individual institutions. This research identifies that if the institutions want to achieve what the Government wants them to achieve by making them more autonomous, they need the kind of leadership that can operate within the autonomous context. However, this research has not been focused on how to develop or find that particular type of leadership. These subjects may not have received



the attention necessary to date. Therefore, it may be helpful if future research will pay closer attention on these issues.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Nine benchmark indicators for internal and external assessment of higher education institutes

The Commission for Higher Education under the Ministry of Education (CHE) and the Office for National Education Standards and Quality (ONESQA) have formulated standards and benchmark indicators for internal and external assessment of higher education institutes consisting of nine aspects:

Quality Aspects	Indicators (ONESQA)	Indicators (CHE)
<b>1. Philosophy, Commitments, Objectives and Implementation Plan</b>	<b>Standards and Benchmarks of Graduates</b> Quality Graduates can think and do and are capable of learning and improving themselves including competence in their work and employment and are able to live with others harmoniously. 1.1 Percentage of graduates who can secure jobs within one year including self-employment and the percentage of graduates who continue their studies at post-graduate levels. 1.2 Degree of satisfaction of employers /business operators /graduate utilizers. 1.3 The ratio of number of papers based on the theses of the Ph.D. graduates published in the journals that have independent referees as against the total number of the Ph.D. theses. 1.4 The ratio of number of papers based on the theses of the Master graduates published in the journals which have independent referees as against the total number of the Master theses.	<input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy / commitments / Objectives and Implementation plan set <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation plan carried out in correspondence with vision / missions / policies / goals jointly determined by the Faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Policies and implementation plan inclusive of main missions <input type="checkbox"/> Personnel informed of the philosophy / commitments / <input type="checkbox"/> Objectives and implementation plan set <input type="checkbox"/> Development plan improved <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation plan evaluated <input type="checkbox"/> Results of the evaluation utilized for improvement of the Implementation plan
<b>2. Teaching and Learning</b> <b>2.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Standards and Benchmarks of Teaching and Learning</b> The mechanism of teaching and learning should be focused on the student, teaching and learning focused on the interest of the student, development of the student based on their capability and their competence in their learning from real life experience for supporting the student to be able to develop naturally and to develop the capability of the student. 2.1 Evidence of educational reform with emphasis on student-centered teaching and learning and the promotion of the development of real experience. 2.2 Evidence of students' view of lecturers' effectiveness on teaching of academic staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum structure in accordance with the CHE standards <input type="checkbox"/> Systematic curriculum management set <input type="checkbox"/> Committee set up and personnel in charge appointed to handle curriculum management <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional media available for enhanced learning. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation of subject(s) conducted by lecturers/students. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation results used for improvements. <input type="checkbox"/> Curriculum development carried out.

Quality Aspects	Indicators (ONESQA)	Indicators (CHE)
	2.3 The number of activities / projects in students' affairs per the total number of students. 2.4 Evidence of research for the development of the learning process.	
<b>2.2 Teaching faculty</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Recruitment and searching system of teaching faculty available. <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching load of teaching faculty determined. <input type="checkbox"/> Qualifications of teaching faculty in line with the specifications set. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan / projects / activities available to support and enhance ethical and moral values of teaching faculty. <input type="checkbox"/> Development and retention of teaching faculty available.
<b>2.3 Teaching and learning process</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Special unit set up to handle curriculum related matters with persons in charge assigned. <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching conducted as planned. <input type="checkbox"/> Course syllabus is available <input type="checkbox"/> Manual of each subject is developed <input type="checkbox"/> Teaching handouts available as stated in the lesson plans. <input type="checkbox"/> Educational technology employed in the teaching and learning process. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation system in place. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation results used for teaching and learning improvements.
<b>2.4 Students</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Student selection system available. <input type="checkbox"/> Follow-up of results of student selection available. <input type="checkbox"/> Student advisory system provided. <input type="checkbox"/> Support and advisory system for students in need is available. <input type="checkbox"/> Tracer study of graduates is conducted.
<b>2.5 Measurement and evaluation</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Special committee set up with persons in charge assigned at both faculty and departmental levels. <input type="checkbox"/> Criteria to measure and evaluate achievements determined. <input type="checkbox"/> Development and verification of test items carried out. <input type="checkbox"/> Test bank is available. <input type="checkbox"/> Students informed of the measurement and evaluation criteria. <input type="checkbox"/> Meetings organized by each department and faculty to endorse the results of the evaluation of each subject.
<b>2.6 Support Factors</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Plan to seek additional support is formulated. <input type="checkbox"/> Persons assigned to support educational provision. <input type="checkbox"/> Instructional materials and equipment is available. <input type="checkbox"/> Information technology and network is available.

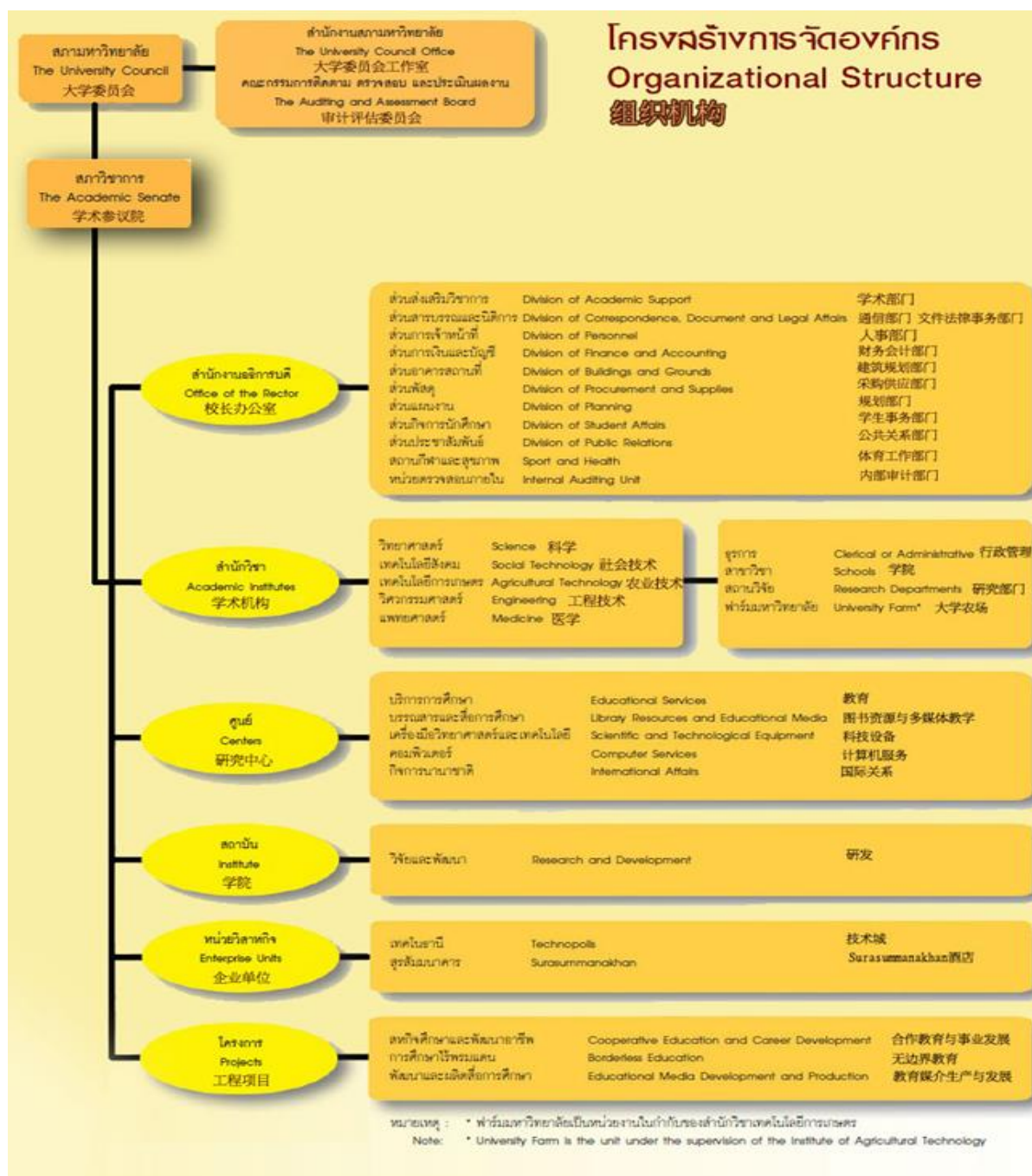
Quality Aspects	Indicators (ONESQA)	Indicators (CHE)
		<input type="checkbox"/> Persons assigned to maintain and provide services on educational equipment. <input type="checkbox"/> Budget is allocated for library and IT development <input type="checkbox"/> Environment is conducive to learning.
<b>3: Student Development Activities</b>	<b>Standards and Benchmarks of Teaching and Learning Support</b> Acquisition and allocation of human, financial and infrastructure resources and support services from internal and external institutes of higher education in the support of the highest level of academic excellence. 3.1 The number of full-time lecturers at all levels per total Full Time Equivalent Student. 3.2 Actual operational budget per total Full Time Equivalent Student. 3.3 Percentage of full-time academic staff with Ph.D. Degrees or equivalent. 3.4 The number of computers used in teaching and learning per total Full Time Equivalent Student. 3.5 The total expense used in the system of Libraries and Information Centers per total Full Time Equivalent Student.	<input type="checkbox"/> Specific unit set up with persons in charge of student development activities. <input type="checkbox"/> Freshmen orientation organized. <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-graduation meeting held <input type="checkbox"/> Measures to monitor students' learning development and quality of life is determined. <input type="checkbox"/> Student development activities is continuously conducted. <input type="checkbox"/> Personality development and leadership program is carried out. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation of student activities conducted and results utilized for further improvements. <input type="checkbox"/> Internships/study visit programs is available. <input type="checkbox"/> Information sources on job placement and further studies is available.
<b>4: Research</b>	<b>Standards and Benchmarks of Research and Innovative Activities</b> Researches that can be widely used and applied and quality innovative activities that can be disseminated for the development of diverse and updated knowledge that can be used to develop the nation. 4.1 The number of published paper per total number of full time academic staff. 4.2 The percentage of research work that has been used for other researches or in teaching and learning or in business or in industry or in developing the nation per total full time academic staff. 4.3 The amount of research funds from external sources relative to full time academic staff at all levels. 4.4 The amount of research funds from internal sources in relation to the total number of full time academic staff at all level.	<input type="checkbox"/> Research committee is established <input type="checkbox"/> Research policies, guiding directions and plans is formulated. <input type="checkbox"/> Quality improvement system is in place <input type="checkbox"/> Research database and network is available. <input type="checkbox"/> Research funding sources both within and outside the faculty / institution is available. <input type="checkbox"/> Research workload determined.
<b>5: Academic Services to the Community</b>	<b>Standards and Benchmarks of Academic Services</b> The providing of academic services that is of use to the development of the community, society so that the Thai society can be a life-long learning knowledge based society. 5.1 The number of activities / projects providing academic services to the society and community.	<input type="checkbox"/> Policies and objectives of the academic service to the community is set. <input type="checkbox"/> Workload on academic services is determined. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation on the implementation is carried out. <input type="checkbox"/> Views of those given the services is sought.

Quality Aspects	Indicators (ONESQA)	Indicators (CHE)
	5.2 The number of academic staff participating in being external members of academic/professional/theses committees to the total number of full time academic staff.	<input type="checkbox"/> Standards, rules and regulations as well as fees is set. <input type="checkbox"/> Dissemination of knowledge through various media is made.
<b>6: Preservation of Art and Culture</b>	<b>Standards and Benchmarks of Preservation of Art and Culture</b> The providing of activities that support the Preservation of Arts and Culture of the Thai heritage and further development and evolution of the Thai heritage. 6.1 The number of activities in the Preservation of Art and Culture. 6.2 Evidence of development and creation of standards in Art and Culture.	<input type="checkbox"/> Policies, aims and objectives of the preservation of art and culture is formulated. <input type="checkbox"/> Plan on the preservation of art and culture is available. <input type="checkbox"/> Report on the implementation is available. <input type="checkbox"/> Measures to oversee the implementation of relevant activities is determined.
<b>7: Administration and Management</b>	<b>Standards and Benchmarks of Management and Administration</b> The mechanism of the management and administration that is efficient and effective that is low cost, competent and transparent and can be audited and assessed to create a value system that is responsible to society. 7.1 Percentage of salary of all personnel in proportion to overall operational budget (but not including the salary of administrators and managers in dormitories and hospitals). 7.2 Percentage of salary of personnel in administration and management in proportion to the overall operational budget or the number of total personnel in administration and management per total Full Time Equivalent Students (FTES) (not including the salary of personnel in dormitories and hospitals). 7.3 Percentage of the expenditure of the central administration and management proportional to the overall operational budget (not including the expenditure in the administration and management of dormitories and hospitals). 7.4 Depreciation per total Full Time Equivalent Student. 7.5 Percentage of the total of operation budget left unused.	<input type="checkbox"/> Administrative structure and system is available <input type="checkbox"/> Flexibility of the administration with the introduction of new technologies to carry out the main missions is seen. <input type="checkbox"/> Responsibilities and workloads of administrators and staff is determined. <input type="checkbox"/> Work manual is developed. <input type="checkbox"/> Database system available to facilitate administrators' decision making. <input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation of staff carried out on the basis of fairness and transparency.
<b>8: Finance and Budgeting</b>		<input type="checkbox"/> Financial and budgetary system is installed <input type="checkbox"/> Fair and transparent system of budget allocation is available <input type="checkbox"/> Budget from other sources is sought in addition to the Government's funding <input type="checkbox"/> Monitoring and audit system of the budget utilization is available <input type="checkbox"/> Expenditure is analyzed and evaluated

Quality Aspects	Indicators (ONESQA)	Indicators (CHE)
<b>9: QA System and Mechanisms</b>	<b>Standards and Benchmarks of System and Mechanism of Quality Assurance</b> The Internal Quality Assurance system is a part of the mechanism to manage the education process for the development of the quality and standards of education that can meet the standards and benchmarks of the external audit and assessment. 8.1 Evidence of a continuous system and mechanism for Internal Quality Assurance. 8.2 Effectiveness of the Internal Quality Assurance.	<input type="checkbox"/> Persons are assigned to be responsible for QA in the faculty/institution <input type="checkbox"/> Committee is established to handle QA implementation at the faculty and departmental levels. <input type="checkbox"/> QA manual is developed <input type="checkbox"/> QA system and mechanisms is in place within the faculty <input type="checkbox"/> Database system within the faculty and the network linked to the university is available <input type="checkbox"/> Readiness and preparation is made for external assessment <input type="checkbox"/> Report on the results of the QA implementation is available

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## Appendix B1: KUT organisation chart



Source: SUT website

## Appendix B2: Budget sources of revenue for 1998-2013 fiscal years

Fiscal years	Source		Total (Million Baht)
	Government Budget (Million	Annual Revenue (Million Baht)	
<b>1998</b>	562.87	210.55	773.42
<b>1999</b>	480.51	242.41	722.92
<b>2000</b>	495.85	197.82	693.67
<b>2001</b>	494.63	195.74	690.37
<b>2002</b>	446.42	166.60	613.02
<b>2003</b>	534.36	196.41	730.77
<b>2004</b>	600.43	190.96	791.39
<b>2005</b>	632.83	256.44	889.27
<b>2006</b>	690.62	282.63	973.25
<b>2007</b>	776.83	345.32	1,122.15
<b>2008</b>	823.45	358.48	1,181.93
<b>2009</b>	968.77	436.38	1,405.15
<b>2010</b>	767.78	445.52	1,213.30
<b>2011</b>	1007.38	487.84	1,495.22
<b>2012</b>	993.90	525.62	1,519.52
<b>2013</b>	1,045.68	582.40	1,628.08

\*Excludes KUT increment, external sources, annual revenue

Source: SUT Annual Report 1998-2013

### Appendix B3: A number of programs in 2011

Faculties	Bachelor	Master	PhD	Total
	No. of	No. of	No. of	No. of
Science	1	9	9	19
Social Tech.	5	3	2	10
Agri Tech.	3	4	4	11
Medicine	3	1	-	4
Nursing	1	-	-	1
Engineering	20	17	12	48
<b>Total</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>93</b>

Source: SUT Annual report 2011

### Appendix B4: KUT cooperative education at work places in Thailand during the academic years 2007 – 2011

Academic Years	No. of Proposing Workplaces	No. of Job Offerings by the Workplaces	Job Placement in the Workplaces	
			No. of Co-op students	No. of Workplaces
2007	540	2,506	1,105	436
2008	579	3,454	1,151	467
2009	662	2,904	1,577	585
2010	706	3,596	1,664	601
2011*	978	3,720	1,571	676

Note: \* Data is as of Academic Year 2011

Sources: Centre for Cooperative Education and Career Development of SUT



**Appendix B5: First year students in academic years 2007 – 2012,  
classified by degree program**

**Units : Person**

<b>Degree Program</b>	<b>Academic Years</b>					
	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>Bachelor's</b>	3,094	2,959	2,740	2,756	2,592	2,971
<b>Master's</b>	286	284	382	331	314	284
<b>Doctoral</b>	105	75	90	91	97	77
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,485</b>	<b>3,318</b>	<b>3,212</b>	<b>3,178</b>	<b>3,003</b>	<b>3,332</b>

Source: Centre for Educational Services, Trimester 2, 30 September 2012

**First year undergraduate students in 2007-2012, classified by types of  
admission.**

**Units: Person**

<b>Types of Admission</b>	<b>Academic Years</b>					
	<b>2007</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>Quota</b>	1,745	1,501	1,132	1,352	1,236	1623
<b>Others (Examination, Admissions and Re-entry)</b>	1,349	1,458	1,608	1,404	1,356	1348
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,094</b>	<b>2,959</b>	<b>2,740</b>	<b>2,756</b>	<b>2,592</b>	<b>2971</b>

Source: Centre for Educational Services, Trimester 2, 30 September 2012

**Appendix B6: Graduates in academic years 2006-2009, classified by program clusters and degree programs**

**Units: Person**

Academic Years	Degree Programs	Program Clusters								Total
		Science	English	Info Tech.	Mngt. Tech.	Agricul Tech.	Engineering	Medicine	Public Health	
2006	<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>1,183</b>
	Bachelor	-	-	132	-	90	740	-	133	1,095
	Master	6	4	-	9	18	25	-	-	62
	Doctoral	16	3	-	-	2	5	-	-	26
2007	<b>Total</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>847</b>		<b>90</b>	<b>1258</b>
	Bachelor			140		125	768		90	1123
	Master	4	3		8	11	72			98
	Doctoral	13	5			12	7			37
2008	<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>137</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>813</b>		<b>114</b>	<b>1311</b>
	Bachelor			136	44	125	723		114	1142
	Master	15	4	1	6	15	85			126
	Doctoral	26	5			7	5			43
2009	<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>1183</b>		<b>157</b>	<b>1806</b>
	Bachelor	4		193	71	152	1061		157	1638
	Master	5	1	4	5	16	114			145
	Doctoral	5	5			5	8			23
2010	<b>Total</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>116</b>	<b>192</b>	<b>1249</b>		<b>177</b>	<b>1957</b>
	Bachelor	13		159	109	148	1101		177	1707
	Master	12	4	7	7	33	143			206

<b>2011</b>	Doctoral	17	11			11	5			44
	<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>136</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>182</b>	<b>1243</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>146</b>	<b>1934</b>
	Bachelor	34		125	83	156	1094	47	146	1685
	Master	15	4	11	5	21	144			200
	Doctoral	33	6			5	5			48

\* Institute of Nursing has not had the graduates yet

Source: Centre for Educational Services, Trimester 2, 30 September 2012

## Honours Graduates in Academic Years 2007 – 2011

	Honours	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
<b>Quota</b>	First class	12	15	29	29	18
	Second class	24	25	42	40	42
	<b>Total</b>	36	40	71	69	60
<b>Admission</b>	First class	1	5	3	4	9
	Second class	8	7	9	8	14
	<b>Total</b>	9	12	12	12	23

Source: Centre for Educational Services, Academic Year 2011

## Appendix B7: Ratio of bachelor graduates of academic year 2010 employed, classified by institutes

Science	Social Tech.	Agric. Tech.	Engineering	Medicine
90.00%	85.56%	88.17%	87.45%	90.54%

## Satisfactions of the KUT graduates' end users, academic year 2010

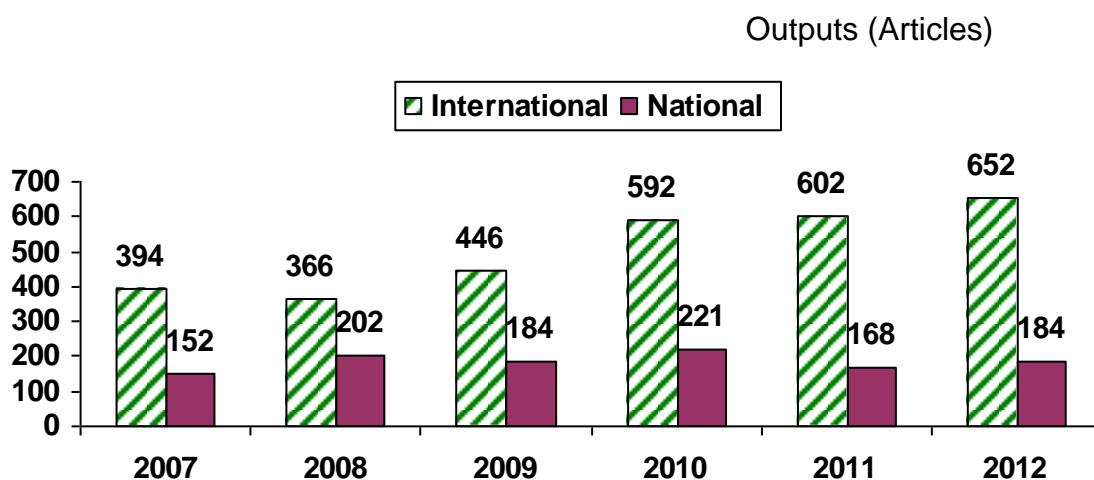
<b>Skills</b>	<b>4.21</b>
- Human Skills	4.22
- Organizational Skills	4.20
- Technological Skills	4.18
- Informational Skills	4.26

<b>SUT Identity (Science and Technology Graduates with Knowledge, Virtues and Wisdom)</b>	<b>4.26</b>
- Knowledge	4.31
- Virtues	4.26
- Wisdom	4.24

<b>National Higher Degree Qualification Frame 4.21 of Reference</b>		
-	<b>Interpersonal Skill and Responsibility</b>	4.08
-	<b>Virtues</b>	4.26
-	<b>Intellectual Skills</b>	4.24
-	<b>Numerical Analytic, Communication and Information Technology Skills</b>	4.18
-	<b>Knowledge</b>	4.30

Institute of Research and Development : SUT

## Appendix B8: Dissemination of research and academic outputs during 2007 – 2012

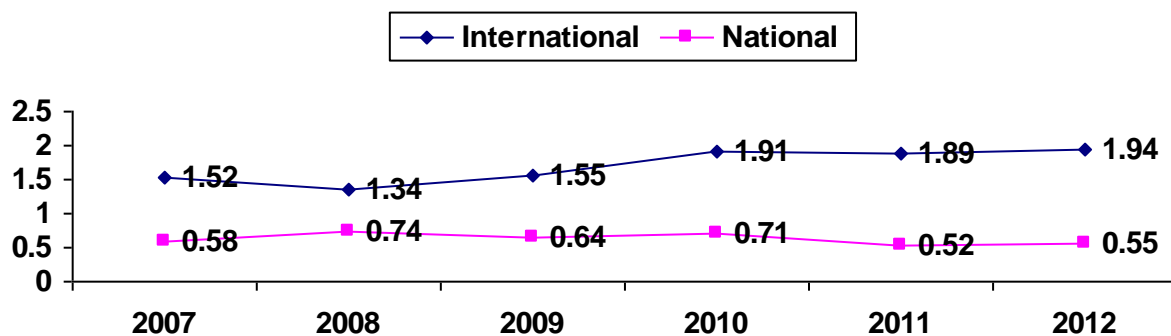


\*Excludes staff on study leave, recorded on 30 September of each year

Source: Institute of Research and Development, Year 2012

## Ratio of research and academic outputs per instructor during 2007 – 2012

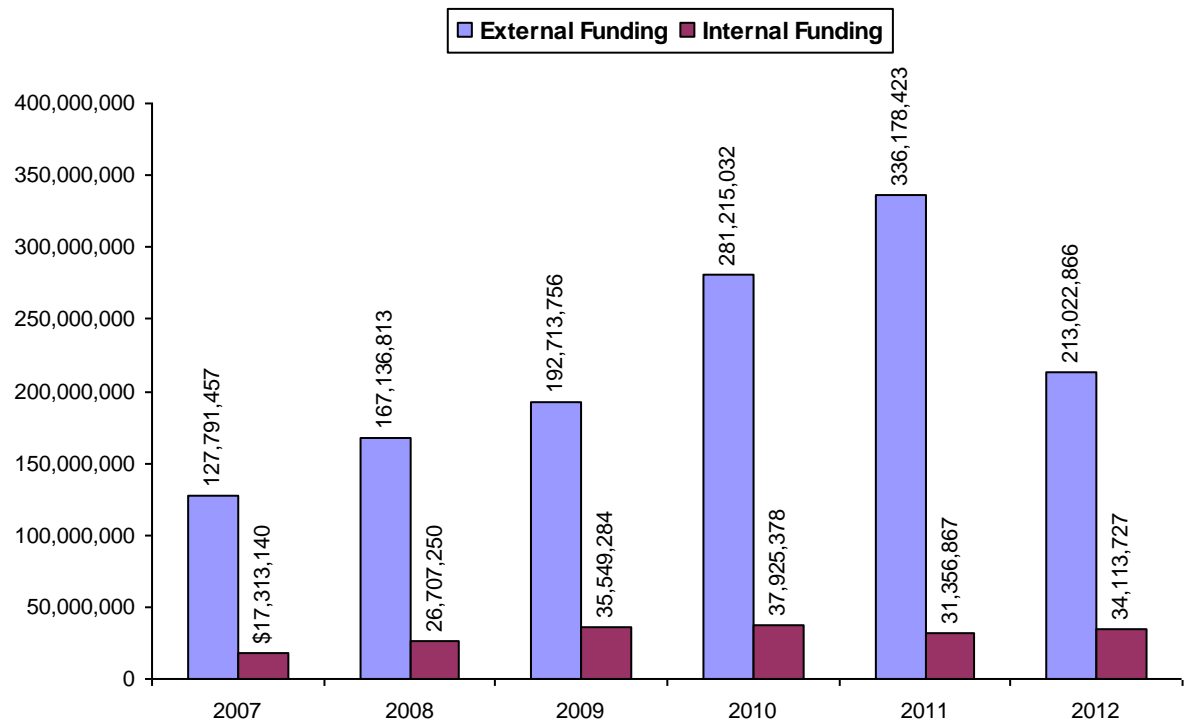
Output: Faculty



\*Excludes staff on study leave, recorded on 30 September of each year

Source: Institute of Research and Development, Year 2012

## Appendix B9: Budgetary subsidies for research projects for the fiscal years 2007 - 2012



Source: Institute of Research and Development, Fiscal Year 2012

## Appendix C1: ETUT organisational chart

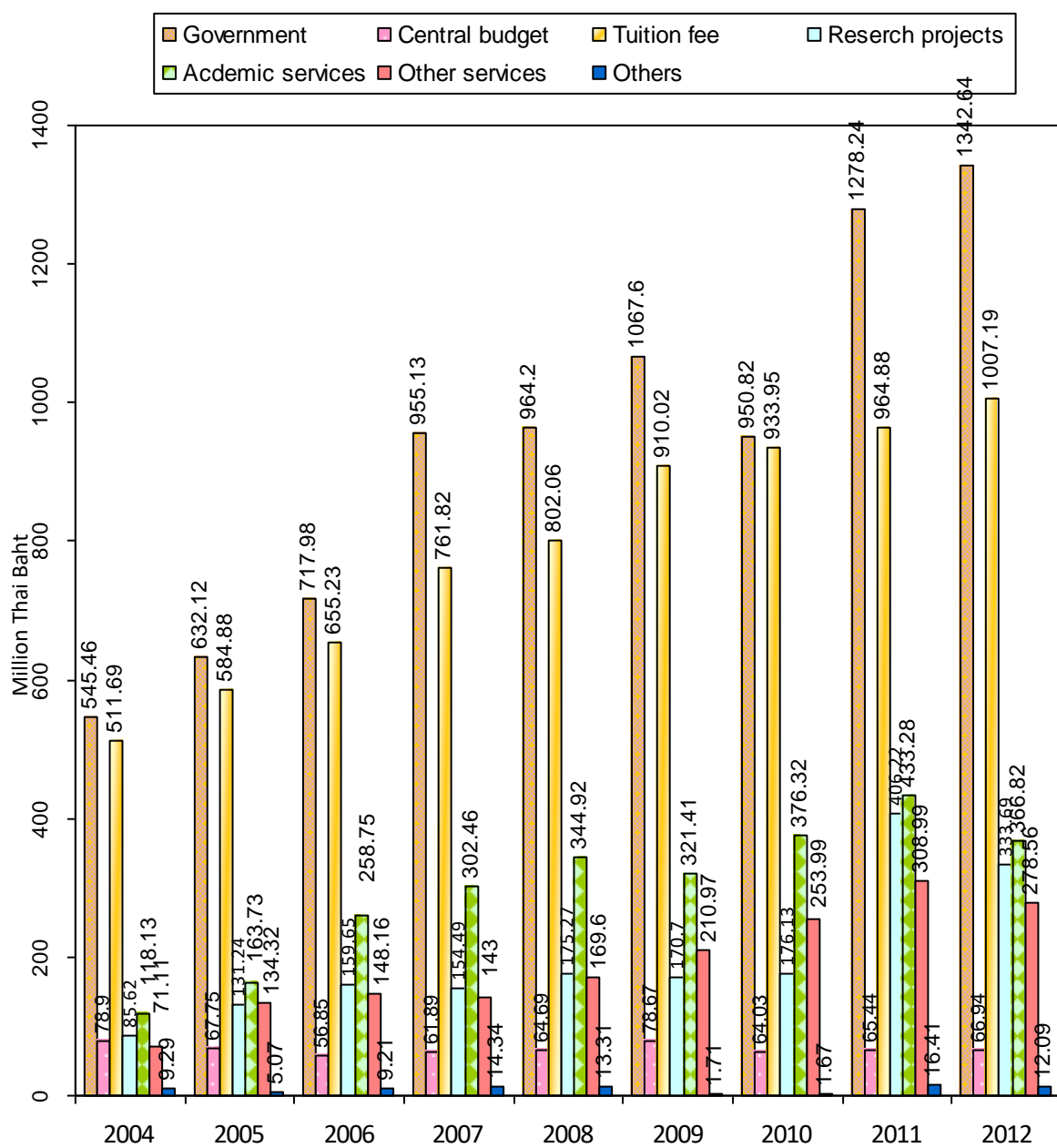
### KMUTT ORGANIZATION CHART





## Appendix C2: ETUT' s sources of income

ETUT income from a variety of sources



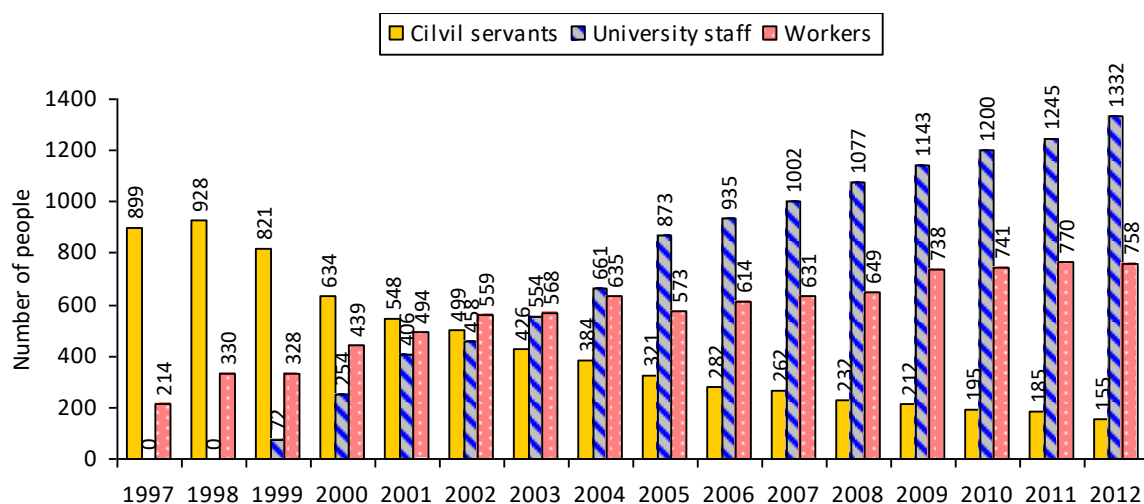
Source: KMUTT Trend 2012

### Appendix C3: A number of programmes and fields of study in 2012

Faculties	Bachelor		Master		PhD		Total	
	No. of programmes	No. of fields	No. of programmes	No. of fields	No. of programmes	No. of fields	No. of programmes	No. of fields
Industrial Edu	5	12	2	7	1	1	8	20
Bioresources	-	-	3	4	1	3	4	7
IT	1	2	1	4	1	2	3	8
Energy	-	-	2	6	2	6	4	12
Science	1	7	1	8	1	4	3	19
Engineering	1	20	2	21	3	10	6	51
Liberal Arts	-	-	1	3	1	1	2	4
Architecture	3	4	3	1	-	-	6	5
GMI	-	-	1	2	1	1	2	3
JGSEE	-	-	2	7	-	-	2	7
Multidis	-	-	3	4	1	2	4	6
Field Robotics	1	1	2	4	1	2	4	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>149</b>

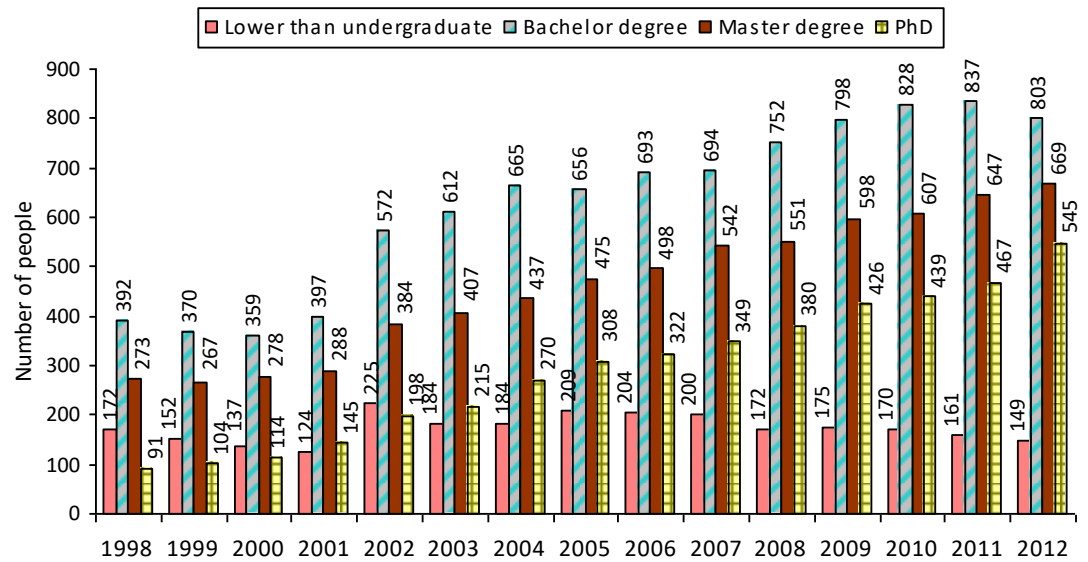
Source: KMUTT annual information 2012

## Appendix C4: A number of total staff of ETUT during 1997-2012



Source: KMUTT annual information 2012

## Appendix C5: All ETUT staff's educational background during 1997-2012



Sources: KMUTT annual information 2013

## **Appendix C6: The Structure of ETUT university council**

The structure of University Council includes: (KMUTT Planning Division, 2007).

- The President of University Council appointed by the King of Thailand
- The President of ETUT
- The Ex-Presidents of ETUT
- Chairman of University Promotion Committee
- Chairman of Faculty and Staff Senate
- The President of ETUT Alumni Association
- One representative from alumni
- One representative from Deans
- One representative from directors of institutes/ centres/ divisions
- Two representatives from Academic Council Committee
- One representative from academic staff
- One representative from support staff
- Nine representatives from outsiders appointed by recommendation of University Council Committee and at least two of them must have qualifications in science and technology
- One – two representative(s) appointed by recommendation of Ministry of University Affairs
- A secretary appointed by recommendation of President of ETUT

## **Appendix C7: ETUT university council duties**

University Council is considered as Governance Board who has twelve main duties (Panich, 2006) as follows:

1. Setting mission and purposes and issuing regulations. University Council needs to understand its goals clearly and make the university reach those goals. This can specify a way for management team's further performances.
2. Selecting the President of university. This is the most important duty as University Council must select a qualified person to be the President of university.
3. Supporting the President's working. University Council needs to pay attention on university's operations by regular participating in the meetings.
4. Controlling and following up the operations of executive management in order to help executive management to work well.
5. Assessing the operations of University Council itself by organising retreat meeting every year.
6. Supporting to create a strategic plan
7. Reviewing academic programmes and social service projects in order to control expenses and adjust their structures.
8. Assuring sufficiency of resources for administration.
9. Assuring good administration and management.
10. Adhering to freedom of university including institutional autonomy and academic freedom.
11. Connecting university to community by building an understanding between community and university.
12. Being as an appeal court to get rid of any conflicts from all stakeholders.

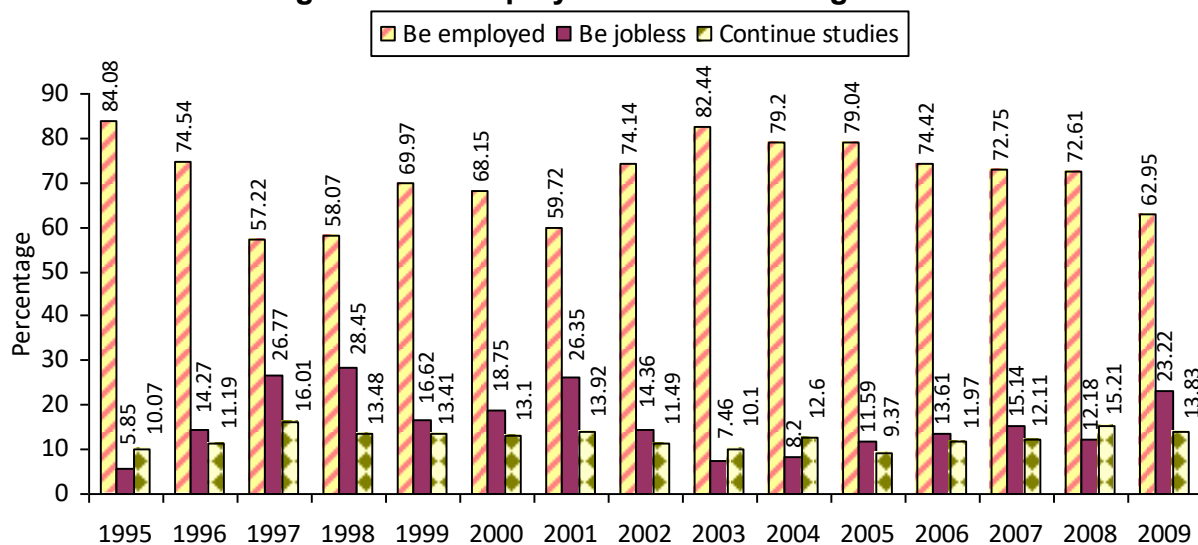
**Appendix C8: Comparison between anticipated numbers of new students showed in an admission plan and actual numbers of new students in 2012**

Faculty/school	Bachelor		Master		Doctorate		Total	
	Plan	Actual no.	Plan	Actual no.	Plan	Actual no.	Plan	Actual no.
Industrial Edu	3,566	3,811	678	601	37	51	4,281	4,463
Bioresources	-	-	171	128	85	89	256	217
IT	634	648	1,653	1,611	21	12	2,308	2,271
Energy	-	-	367	332	131	168	498	500
Science	1,752	1,675	190	193	109	100	2,051	1,968
Engineering	4,959	5,146	1,504	1,472	180	197	6,643	6,815
Liberal Arts	-	-	96	85	17	24	113	109
Architecture	553	535	50	47	-	-	603	582
GMI	-	-	573	632	-	-	573	632
JGSEE	-	-	95	111	92	92	187	203
Multidis	-	1	71	49	14	25	85	75
Field Robotics	-	-	77	71	11	7	88	78
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,464</b>	<b>11,816</b>	<b>5,525</b>	<b>5,332</b>	<b>697</b>	<b>765</b>	<b>17,686</b>	<b>17,913</b>

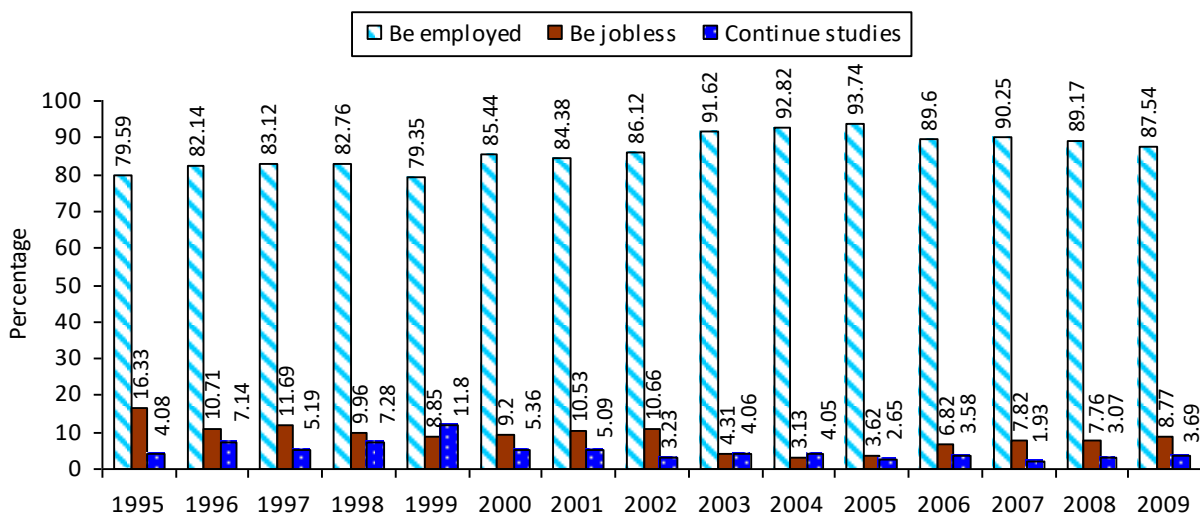
Source: KMUTT annual information 2013

## Appendix C9: ETUT graduates' employment status during 1995-2009

### Undergraduates' employment status during 1995-2009



### Postgraduates' employment status during 1995-2009

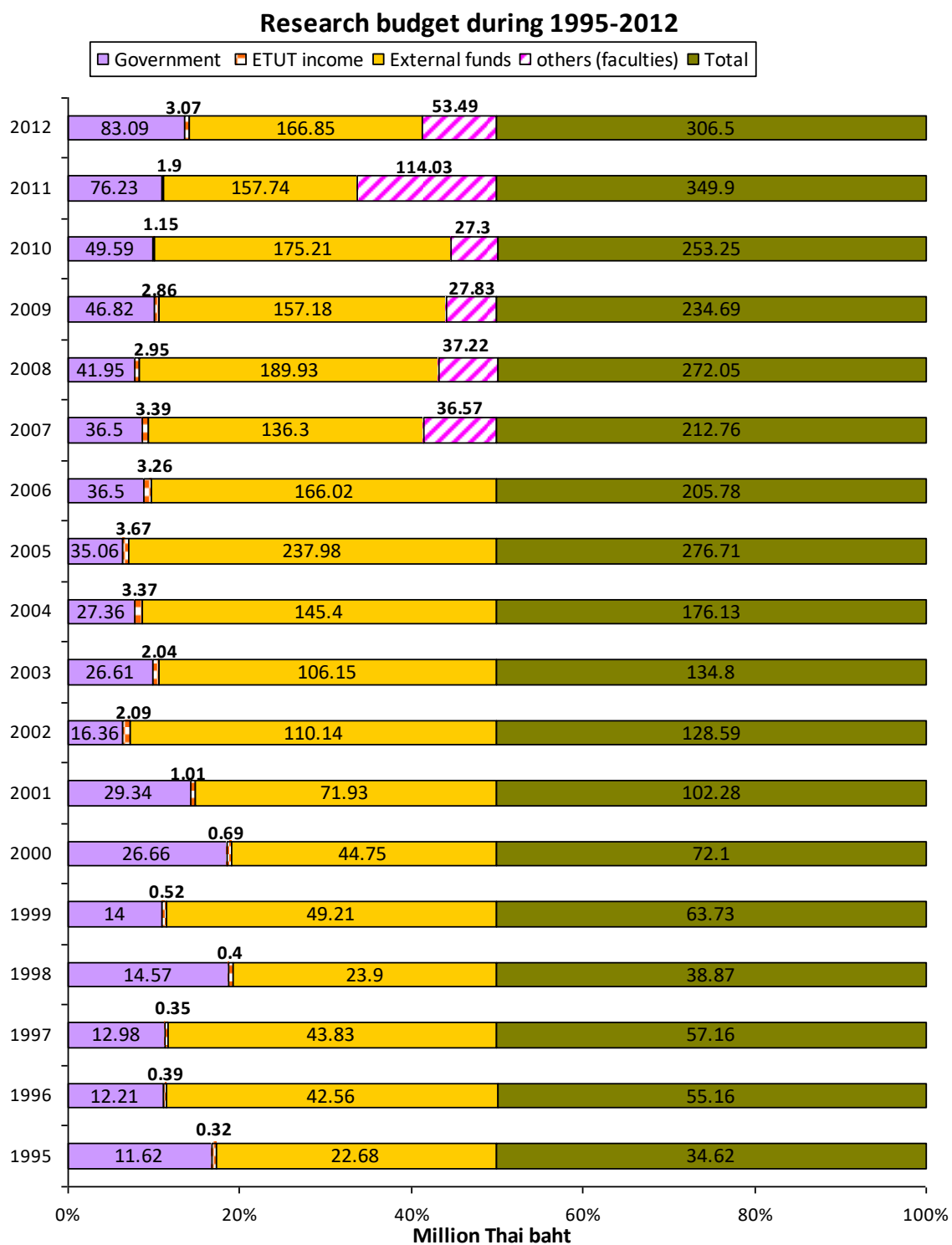


\* Researching after graduation from 4-8 months

Source: KMUTT Trend 2010

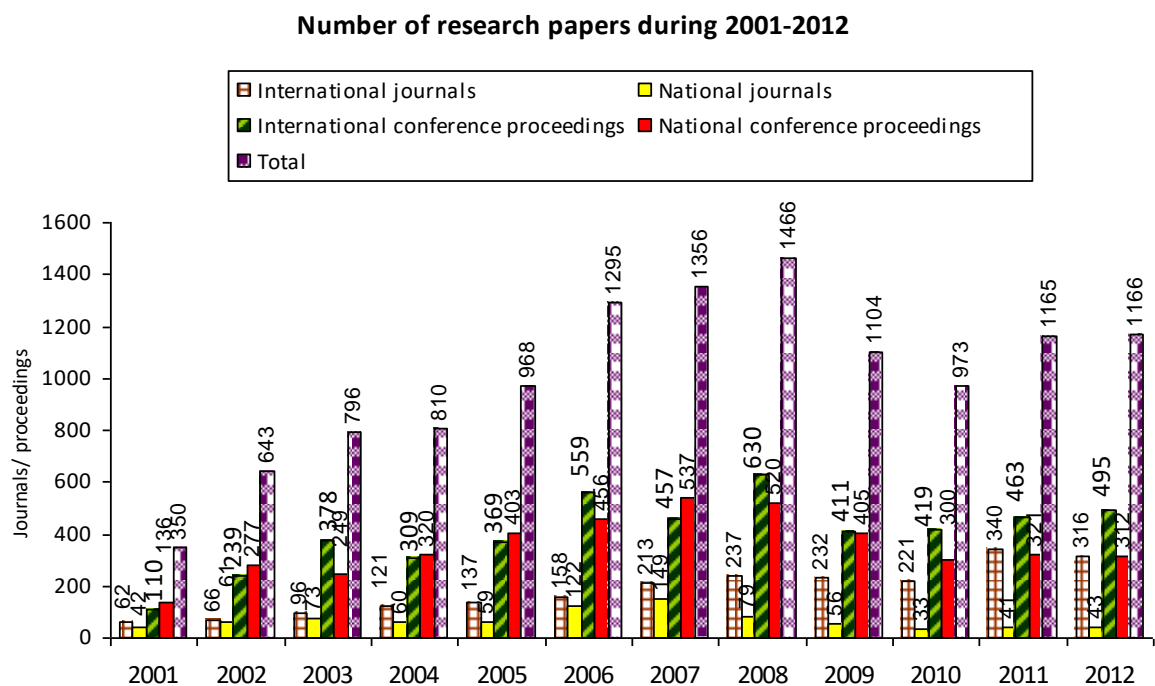


## Appendix C10: Research budget during 1995-2012



Source: KMUTT trend 2012

## Appendix C11: Number of research papers during 2001-2012



Source: KMUTT Trend 2012

**Appendix C12: Overall operation of academic services during 2008-2011**

<b>Academic services</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Testing service (times)</b>	2,132	1,466	7,315	1,262
<b>Academic training (projects)</b>	132	363	313	167
<b>Number of trainees (people)</b>	16,860	15,016	25,444	12,906
<b>Total income from academic services (million Thai baht)</b>	345.01	322.48	378.29	434.21

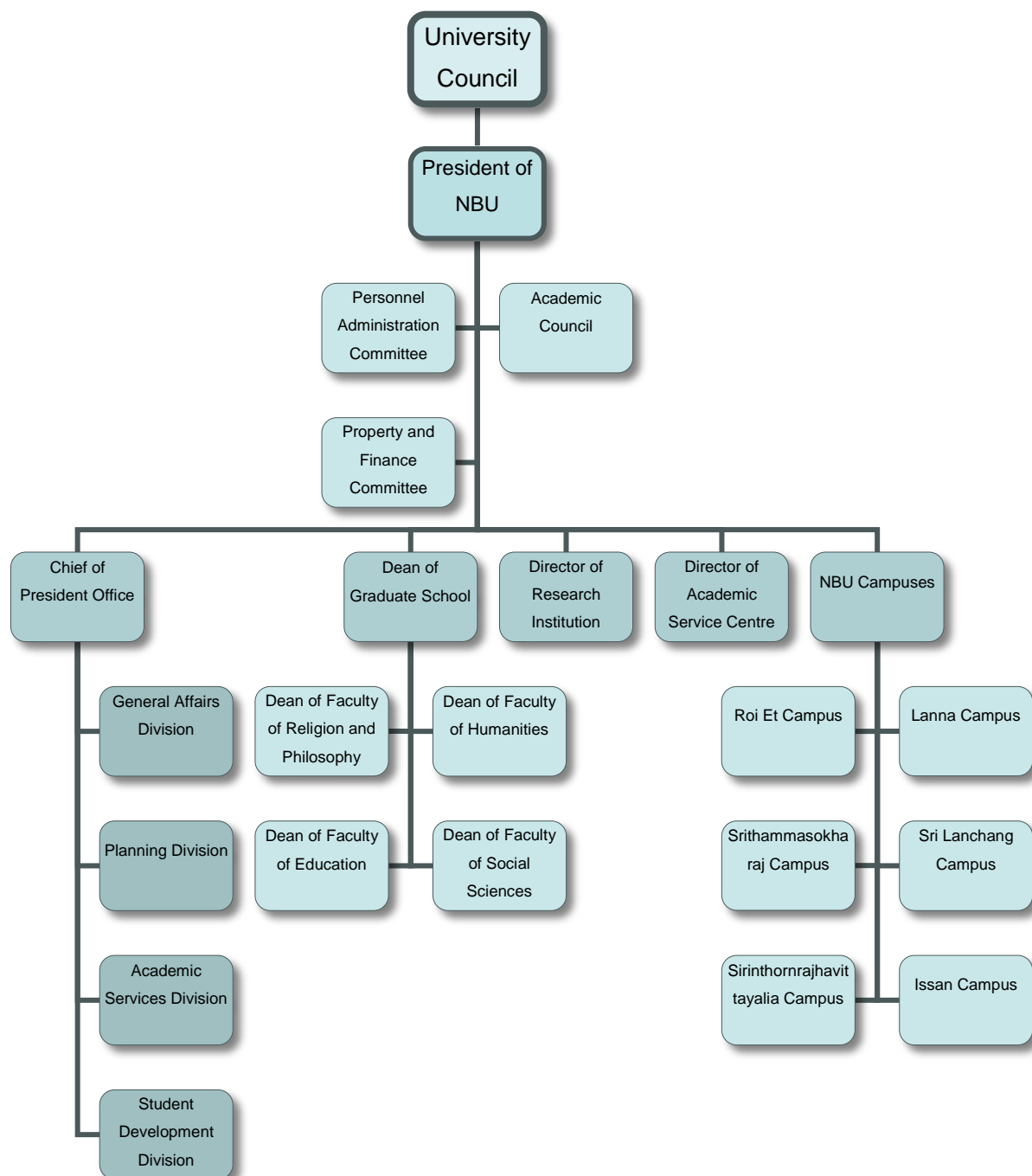
Source: KMUTT Overall operation of year 2011

**Appendix C13: Overall operation of maintaining arts and cultures during 2008-2011**

<b>Number of</b>	<b>2008</b>	<b>2009</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2011</b>
<b>Projects</b>	182	116	125	119
<b>Participants</b>	36,518	25,061	21,050	27,261
<b>Expenses (million Thai baht)</b>	5.28	5.06	8.91	7.28

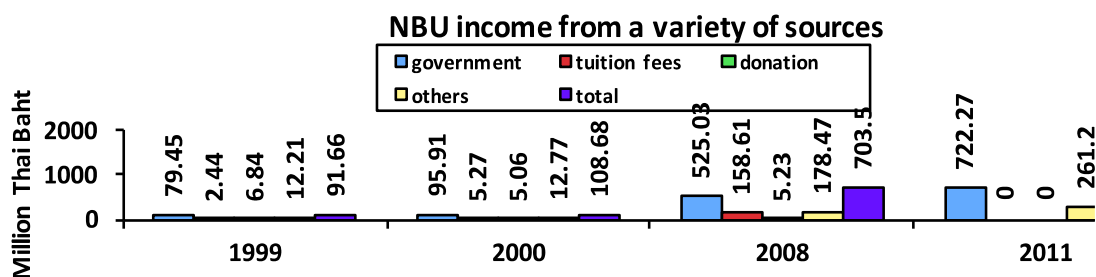
Source: KMUTT Overall operation of year 2011

## Appendix D1: NBU organisational chart



Source: MBU Website (MBU, 2012)

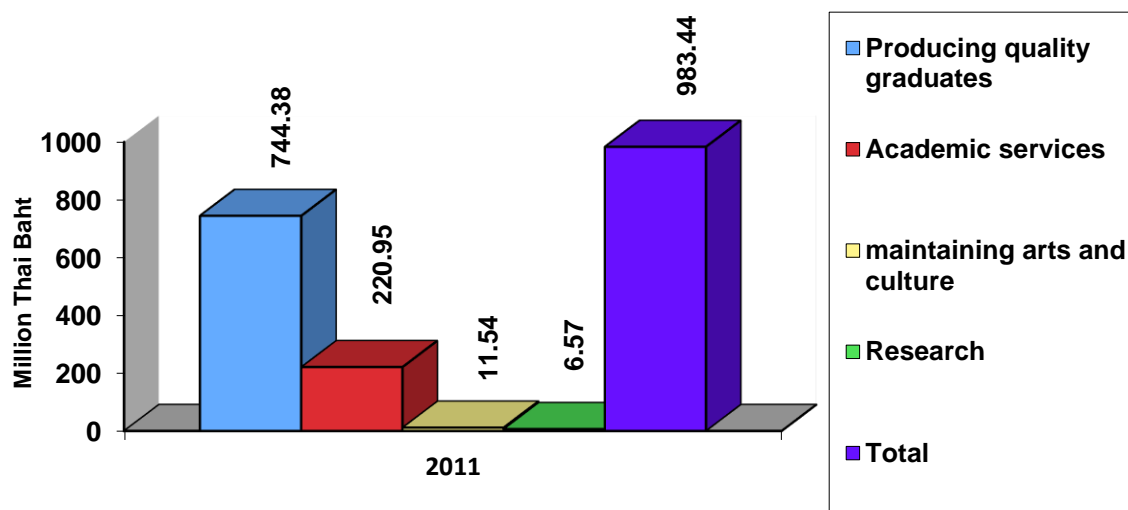
**Appendix D2 : NBU income from a variety of sources in 1999, 2000, 2008 and 2011**



Source: Annual Report 1999, 2000, 2008 and 2011

**Appendix D3: NBU budget allocation in 2011**

**Budget allocation by the four main missions**



Source: Annual Report 2011

#### **Appendix D4: The structure of NBU's university council**

Membership of the University Council is as follows: (MBU annual report, 2011)

1. The President of University Council who is nominated by the Supreme Patriarch.
2. Seven permanent members including President of the university, Permanent Secretary- Ministry of Education, Office of the Education Council Secretary, Office of the Higher Education Commission Secretary, Office of the Civil Service Commission Secretary, Director of Bureau of the Budget and Director of National Office of Buddhism.
3. Seven monks who are members of the university academic senate such as; Vice-President or Deans. They will be designated by the Supreme Patriarch with the advice of the seven permanent members.
4. Six to Eight distinguished persons who can be either monks or laypersons – (i.e. either insiders or outsiders). These members will be appointed by the Supreme Patriarch with the advice of the seven permanent members. At least half the members of this group must be monks and the university council will designate one of them as Vice-President of the university council, who must be one of the monks in this group.

## **Appendix D5: The main function of the university council**

The main functions of the university council are as follow: (MBU annual report, 2011)

1. Setting and planning the university strategic policies to enhance the four main missions including producing quality graduates, conducting research, providing Buddhist academic service to the society and monks and maintaining arts and culture.
2. Institution the university rules and regulation including giving an authority to the divisions to establish their own rules and regulations.
3. Approval of delivering degrees, diplomas and certificates
4. Approval of establishing, integrating and restructuring sub-organisations.
5. Approval admission and cancellation of the participation of other Buddhist higher education institutions and Research centres.
6. Approval of opening, closing, integrating and adjusting the appropriateness of curriculums
7. Proposing appointment and withdrawal the President position to the Supreme Patriarch to approve
8. Proposing appointment and withdrawal Professor and Adjunct Professor to the Supreme Patriarch to approve
9. Appointment and withdrawal chief executives including Vice-President, Assistant-President, Dean, Director, Distinguished Professor, Associate Professor and Assistant Professor
10. Establishment regulations of human resource management
11. Setting policies for the university budget and asset management
12. Approval of the university expenses
13. Appointment committee or a person to operate any affair, which is under the supervision of the university council.
14. Monitoring and assessment work performances of chief executives



15. Function other duties relating to the university affairs that  
does not specify a particular person in charge